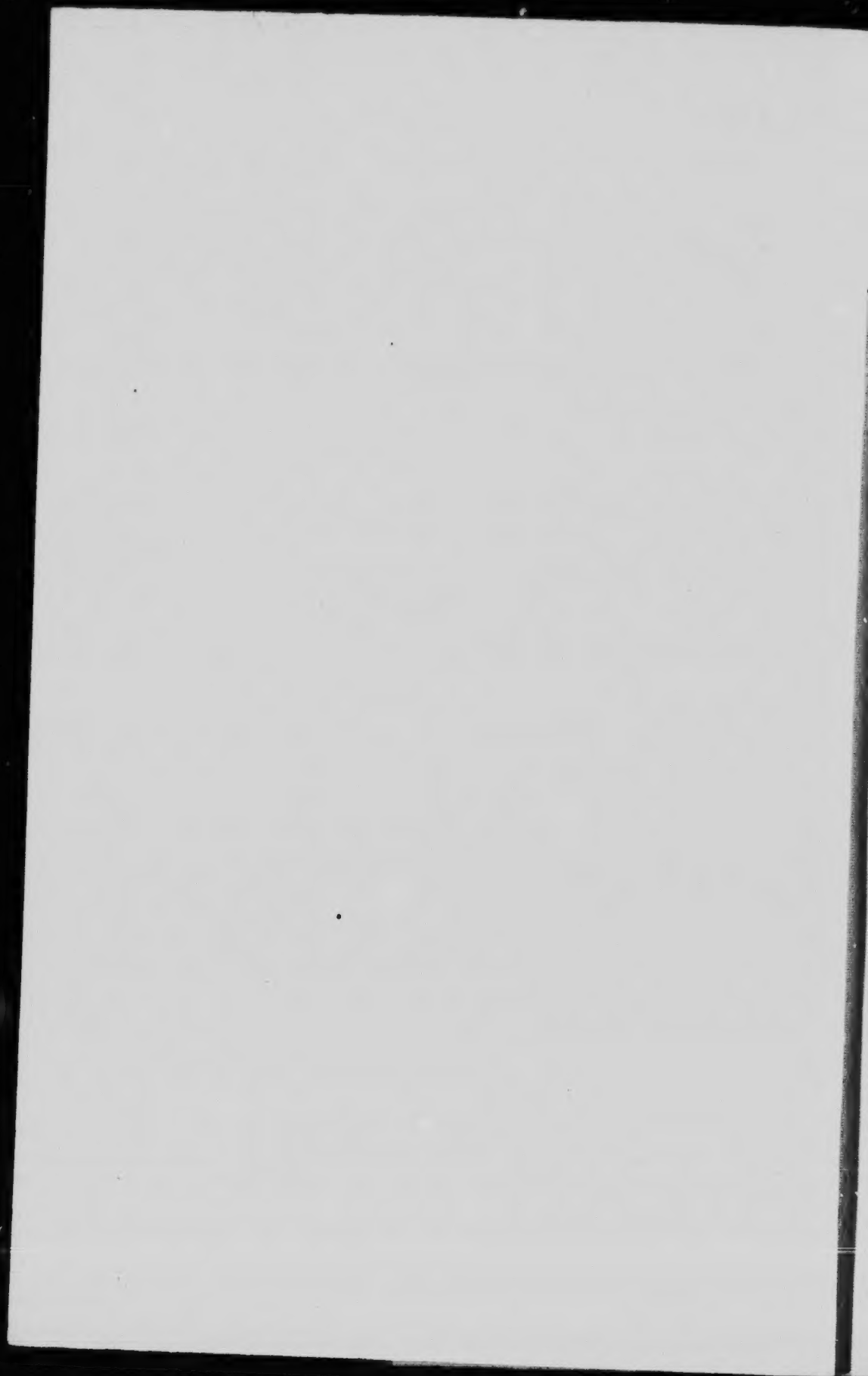


1 157

R. L. Warren.



EL DORADO.

BY SAME AUTHOR—

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE.

A PLUNGE INTO SPACE.

THE CRACK OF DOOM.

THE KING'S OAK.

THE LOST LINER.

KITTY'S VICTORIA CROSS.

A NEW MESSIAH.

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS.



" Marie sprang back with a cry, but Kleinpaul never stirred."

El Dorado]

(Page 214.)

[*Frontispiece*

EL DORADO.

BY
ROBERT CROMIE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS," "THE CRACK OF DOOM,"

"A PLUNGE INTO SPACE," "A NEW MESSIAH,"

ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY VICTOR PROUT.

TORONTO:
LANGTON & HALL.

1904.

PR6005

R677

ES

1904

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—INNISKERRY	7
II.—THE GIRL ON THE LINKS	19
III.—THE SANATORIUM	28
IV.—LOST ON THE MOOR	38
V.—IN THE CLIFFS OF CROAGHAUN	47
VI.—THE FIRST OF THE EXPEDITION	50
VII.—THE SIGNING OF THE BOND	71
VIII.—GOLF AMONG THE GRAVES	82
IX.—THE LAST NIGHT ON SHORE	92
X.—THE FIRST DAY AFLOAT	103
XI.—WESTWARD HO!	114
XII.—FAREWELL TO THE "AILEEN"	123
XIII.—IN PERIL ON THE SEA	132
XIV.—ARCHÆOLOGY, ETC.	142
XV.—A BAD ANCHORAGE	151
XVI.—A CURIOUS TOW	158
XVII.—A MYSTERIOUS CAPTAIN	166
XVIII.—IN THE FOREST	175
XIX.—EL DORADO	185

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX.—THE EDEN OF THE WEST	197
XXI.—GOLGOTHA	207
XXII.—IN DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW	217
XXIII.—BURIED ALIVE	232
XXIV.—A DESERTER	240
XXV.—MACKENZIE'S CONFESSION	249
XXVI.—MAN PROPOSES—VARIOUSLY	260
XXVII.—THE RACE TO THE COAST	271
XXVIII.—A CLOSE CALL	281
XXIX.—WOMAN VERSUS WINE	290
XXX.—SETTLING DAY	301

EL DORADO.

CHAPTER I.

INNISKERRY.

"SAVE us, yer honour, aren't ye goin' to get up the day?"

This, with a bang at the door which suggested bombardment, aroused Dr. Maurice Whitmore, a rising London physician, in failing health, whose business in Inniskerry was to heal himself. He had arrived late on the previous evening and put up at the small hotel.

Whitmore was on his feet, in the middle of the room, in a second, and clu'ping at his clothes.

"Ready in a minute! Down directly! Gad, I thought it was a call, and that I was still within sight of St. Paul's," he grumbled as he began to shave.

"What'll ye be hevin' for breakfast, yer honour?" The question came through the keyhole;

Whitmore thought of broiled sheep's kidneys and *croquettes au homard*. As a physician and a man he knew this was indigestible—but he was a victim to it.

"What have you got?" he asked, without opening the door.

Said the small voice of the small maid of the inn, "We hev ham an' eggs, boiled eggs, an'—fried eggs."

In an epicurean frenzy, the doctor ordered the whole menu; and the voice outside went on:

"Yer honour, there's a strange boat comin' intil the bay. The whole town's down at the quay to see her comin' in; an' I was afeared ye'd miss her."

Whitmore was quickly dressed, down, breakfasted—mainly on eggs—and on the quay. He was more directly interested in the incoming craft than any one there. He was expecting a friend, and hoped this was the boat in which his friend had promised to arrive. There was a stiff breeze blowing off the land, and a smart little yacht, close-reefed and close-hauled, but stepping through the water at a great rate, was beating in. At the distance, Whitmore could not distinguish whether it was the boat for which he was waiting. His nautical knowledge was neither comprehensive nor exact, and he could scarcely tell one boat from another, however near, save by the printed name. He spoke therefore to a man whose trousers seemed

to indicate that he was not wholly unconnected with seafaring in small boats.

"It's the *Aileen*," the man answered. "The fastest boat ivir was in Galway Bay." As he spoke the yacht swept round, her sails flapped a moment, and filled immediately on the other tack, a white smoke driving away to leeward from her bows, "An' the gintleman that owns her can sail her."

This expression was approved by the surrounding fishermen, who questioned the speaker, a Galway man, at some length on the subject of the yacht and her owner. Whitmore moved away from them. He had heard all he wanted to know, and the Galway man's further remarks would not interest him.

"Mackenzie has certainly kept his promise," the London doctor reflected, as he watched the boat come in by short tacks which even he, backward in nautical knowledge as he was, could see were neatly executed. "I wonder what he'll do with me, now that he has got me here. It is not the most lively place in the world to bring a man suffering from nervous exhaustion brought on by over-work. But I must not complain of it to Mackenzie. He had set his heart on bringing me here. He meant it in kindness—and the intention is everything."

By this time the yacht was so close that Whitmore was able to make out the burgee of Mackenzie's club on the mast-head, and

presently he saw Mackenzie himself, and waved his hand in return to a powerful hail from the yachtsman. The largest crowd which Inniskerry had mustered for many a day was on the pier to welcome the *Aileen*. Harbour-Master Tregellis, in command, was very busy keeping back the people, getting casting ropes ready, and arranging a berth for the strange yacht. The Irishry were chaffing the harbour-master with the merciless humour of the Celt. The harbour-master replied to them unwisely, and with the rugged directness of the Saxon. He was no match for them in this contest. But he did his work, and that was more than most on the quay could have claimed. Stung by the chaff of the loafers, he announced his gospel for the day :

" I does my work. I draws my pay. And I doesn't care a damn ! "

This terse speech impressed the crowd, and they desisted. But they rejoiced exceedingly when Tregellis, intently watching the yacht, stepped inadvertently off the quay and into fifteen feet of blue water. Mackenzie, smoking his pipe at the tiller of his boat, took in the situation at a glance. He ran the boat into the wind, and at the risk of striking the pier, picked up the harbour-master in his last gasp. Dr. Whitmore did not find artificial respiration necessary for the rescued man. A little artificial stimulation in the form of brandy from the yachtsman's flask was all Tregellis re-

quired, or would have permitted. Soon afterwards the boat was berthed, and the incident, as far as Tregellis was concerned, was closed—for the time.

Alexander Mackenzie, a well-known man on 'Change, came ashore, greeted his friend Dr. Whitmore with a heartiness that was quite sincere, and, at his first look round, declared that he wanted to sell Inniskerry for a "fall." In fact, Inniskerry, like so many West of Ireland towns or villages, had already partly fallen, and the remains of each deceased house lay on and around its own foundations, according to a rule which is strictly without exception. The stockbroker, a big, hearty fellow, with a blonde beard trimmed in the naval fashion, blunt in speech, boisterous in manner, and robust in health, was in every way a striking contrast to his friend. There was as little resemblance between them in their favourite pursuits as in their personal appearance. The scholarly physician's thin intellectual face was close-shaven, his hair jet black; he was of spare habit and great mental resources, although these were centred too closely, perhaps, on therapeutics and—his only hobby—archæology. It was always thought strange that two such opposite characters should continue—so far as their diverse walks in life permitted—inseparable friends. But the fact remained, and we need not puzzle over it.

When they had got through the preliminary

inquiries usual between particular friends, one of whom is on the sick list, Mackenzie asked with a certain peremptoriness of tone which had no real significance further than an indication of robust health :

"How did your chief take your application for leave? He did not like it, I'll swear. Selfish old cad as ever lived!"

"Characteristically, if not very cordially," Whitmore answered. "He conveyed that it was most unreasonable of a junior partner to break down in the middle of a valuable metropolitan epidemic. He had not expected it of me. He was disappointed in me."

"And you! What did you say?" They were now sauntering down the main thoroughfare of the village on the way to the hotel, and their appearance was duly noted by the inhabitants. Mackenzie's yachting dress and Dr. Whitmore's London-made shooting suit gave the Inniskerry maidens cause for much contention. Between two such admirable costumes, it was really very hard to choose. They argued the matter weightily and patiently, and the topic served them well. Probably it is not decided yet.

"Oh, I admitted that I was disappointed in myself," Whitmore said. "Then I told him straight that I must have a long rest; that you had been worrying me in the most extraordinary way to join you in this outlandish village."

"I hope you did not say that," Mackenzie interrupted hastily.

"That this is an outlandish village? What then is it?"

"I don't mean that. I meant that I did not wish you to say that I was—er—specially pressing you—but it does not matter. Go on." Mackenzie's manner was embarrassed. Whitmore noticed it, but forgot it in a moment. He continued:

"I told him that you had offered me a share of your shooting for a fortnight, and that you were bringing your yacht round to Galway Bay, so that if the sport on land turned out bad we could vary it by a trip on water. Altogether, without much exaggeration, I convinced him that it would be a wise course to get me off at once; that it would pay the firm in the end. So here I am."

"And here's the Hotel Metropole of Inniskerry," Mackenzie announced. "And I am going in to have a whisky and soda at your expense, Dr. Whitmore. And you are going to join me."

"At this time in the morning!" the doctor cried aghast. "Mackenzie, you are joking."

Mackenzie insisted that he was in solemn earnest, but finally agreed to commute the whisky-and-soda for a bottle of beer for himself, and to let Whitmore off altogether. While he was drinking his beer and discussing plans for the recreation of his invalid friend, a little knot of children passed up the street.

Mackenzie noticed the procession through the wire blind on the lower half of the window, and asked Whitmore, who was standing looking out, what was going on :

"Is it a bear or a monkey they have got ?"

"It is a man. He seems some sort of African or Asian type."

"Curse him ! What is he doing off the yacht ?" Mackenzie shouted, springing to his feet, and dashing out into the street without waiting to pick up his cap.

"Is it possible the British sailor is being driven absolutely off the sea : from private yachts as well as ocean liners ?" Whitmore reflected. "I had no idea things had come to such a pass." Mackenzie soon returned, looking annoyed and upset, but Whitmore did not think there could be any harm in asking him if he had shipped a Lascar crew on the *Aileen*.

"Well yes—er—they are, so to speak, a present from a friend—Joyce—Joyce of Throgmorton Street—giving up his boat—asked me to take them off his hands—rather a nuisance—could not well refuse—children here follow any curiosity—sent the man back to the yacht and told him to stay there—can't speak a word of English—lose himself." Mackenzie rattled this out and then changed the subject. A different explanation of the incident was forthcoming in due course. But before that arrived many strange things happened.

The stockbroker, who was a huge success in Inniskerry, found it possible, given the society of his friend, to live in a remote locality for a few days without gambling on "bulls," "bears," or anything else. He himself could hardly have got bigger, broader, or more robust even in this healthy environment, but he was rather anxious about Whitmore when he found that the Doctor was not picking up as fast as he could have wished. The shooting which he had long rented, but had never previously seen, was close by. There was fair sport on it, but Mackenzie had tired of it, he said, sooner than he expected, and often made furtive visits to the berth where his boat was lying. One morning, when Whitmore was particularly dull, Mackenzie broke out suddenly and strenuously:

"You are not doing about this shooting in the right spirit. You must pull yourself together. Tramp the moor for your very life. Hit or miss, keep after the birds. This air, if anything, will set you up if you give it a chance. And if the shooting fails, try golfing. The links of Inniskerry are justly celebrated. It isn't the Royal and Ancient course—not by a jugful. There, one could drive across the biggest bunker with a hard-boiled egg and a teaspoon. Here, it is mountain-climbing in a mild way—the Sahara in miniature. One would require an alpenstock to climb these heights, a camel to cross these deserts. Oh, oh!" shouted the exuberant stock-

broker, "this is golf with the gloves off. This is the ancient game up to the moment of going to press!"

"Why don't you golf yourself, when you are so enthusiastic?" Whitmore asked gloomily.

"An excellent conundrum!" Mackenzie cried. "Why doesn't a Scotsman golf? Answer—Because he can't. My left arm is very—er—badly strained. Nasty fall, that day I went over Ben Madagan. Thought I had tumbled right down to the bottom of the mountain."

"Let me see your arm. It may be worse than you think."

"Oh, I am all right now. Besides, I am in a hurry. Get you to look at it when I come back. I am off for a sail. Would ask you to come only that the exercise will be better for you than even sea breezes. Will get you to look at my arm when I come back. Meantime do what I tell you, and we'll both go back to town fit for anything; you for the finest operation in surgery—I forgot that's not your particular line—and I for the biggest deal on 'Change. And now with these remarks I'm off for a cruise round the rock of Tormore—if the wind holds."

Mackenzie bustled about in his breezy way; flung the materials for a good lunch into a basket; and in half an hour the *Aileen* was standing out to sea in a light breeze. Whitmore watched the boat listlessly till it dis-

appeared round a headland, and then as a mere duty to his own health he set out for the moor. He had poor sport, and a lonely day, and that practically disposed of his waning interest in the shooting. He had not found it enthralling, even with Mackenzie's cheery company added, and it was insupportable singlehanded. He gave it up, therefore, without regret, and determined to explore some of the rich hunting grounds for the archaeologist with which the district abounded. In this he met with more success.

When Whitmore got back to Inniskerry that evening, he brought with him several trifles locally unconsidered, but which were full of interest for him, and would, he believed, furnish him with fresh matter for a paper he was to read during the winter before a very learned society in London. Yet, in the midst of a more systematical examination of his treasures in the hotel after dinner, he interrupted his own train of thought by saying to himself, in the irritable tone of a man who, not being in good health, makes much ado about nothing:

"I don't understand Mackenzie. There seems to be something on his mind. And why does he always sail to Tormore, no matter what way the wind is. He brought me here—not perhaps against my will, but here he would have dragged me whether I willed it or not. And now that I am here he does not seem to know what to do with me. I believe he does

not wish me to go on these cruises with him. He is too good a fellow to leave me moping about alone unless he has some special reason. I suppose it's not worth worrying about. I daresay I'll find out what's the matter with him if I give him his own time to tell."

He did.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIRL ON THE LINKS.

NEXT day the *Aileen* had not returned to her berth, nor was there any sign of her at sea. This caused no anxiety, as Mackenzie's movements and cruises depended, it would seem, on the caprice of the moment. Some of the old salts did not like the look of the weather, but the *Aileen* was a good boat, and Mackenzie, they knew, was a good skipper.

"Wudn't be feared to go with him to Ameriky," they all agreed, while they admitted that some of the Inniskerry headlands—notably Tormore—were not easy to weather when the wind blew hard from the west.

"But what the devil makes a gentleman like Mr. Mackenzie hev dalins with them black haythens at all?" a discontented mariner grumbled. "Isn't there men in Inniskerry, Christins, that cud sail his boat, iv there's noan in Galway?"

This was well received, and the discontented mariner continued: "Where did he get them anny way? Maybe you cud tell us, Mr. Tregellis?"

"Yes," said Mr. Tregellis, who had come up with Dr. Whitmore. "I could tell you, but I don't intend. Mr. Mackenzie consults me—er—to a large extent. But he did not mention as how he wanted me to consult you." This was not strictly accurate, but it contributed to the authority Tregellis loved, and did very little harm.

"But sure, Mr. Tregellis, it's not consultin' at all. It's only that you'd be after telling us where he got the blacks."

"It'll be a long time before I am after it," Tregellis retorted, with a slight confusion of phrase, but a directness which promptly dismissed the subject.

Dr. Whitmore chatted with Tregellis till the harbour-master was called away, and then he found himself thrown on his own resources to while away another day. As an aid in this cheerless process he decided to visit the golf links which Mackenzie had described with so much enthusiasm. That, however, he would reserve for the afternoon; the day would be long enough, no matter how he husbanded the means to pass it. He devoted the rest of the morning, first to his letters, and then to thinking out the general drift and scope of the archæological paper he was to read before the learned society in London. In the latter process he found that the treasure-trove he had picked up by chance in Inniskerry, or its neighbourhood, would be most useful, and that his visit, therefore, if not otherwise very

THE GIRL ON THE LINKS. 21

interesting, would not be altogether barren. That particular paper was never read by Whitmore ; but a better one was, one with vastly more treasure-trove in it ; and the second, although less directly, was not less certainly due to his trip to Inniskerry.

He got through the morning thus without undue *ennui*, and his little walk to the post office was a boon as much appreciated by the married ladies of the village as the spinsters. There was a tone about the London gentleman and his yachting friend that the rustic heart has always a warm corner for, and the verdict on both Mackenzie and Whitmore had been agreed to, as it were, without leaving the box :

"Sure, it's aisy to see they're quality, anny-way ! "

When the afternoon arrived, Dr. Whitmore met with a puzzling little episode on the golf links which was wholly unconnected with the game. Finding no suitable partner, he went for a round of the links by himself. He was playing in a perfunctory way that seriously distressed his caddie ; his mind was running on other matters, and in consequence he achieved that futility at the game which justly afflicts those exasperating and illogical persons who refuse to take sport seriously—when they could so easily and, considering their method, so much better leave it alone. Thus he played a ball, not very dexterously, over a formidable sandhill which was entirely off

his line, and could not see where it fell. But when he climbed to the summit of the hill to have a look around, he found that the ball had dropped, or rolled, close to a low, turf-carpeted bank where a girl was sitting. She was a stranger to that remote region, he judged, by the style of her dress, which was more suggestive of Hyde Park than Inniskerry. She was a good-looking girl, too, of a type which was as unusual in that neighbourhood as her stylish gown. Her costume fitted her neat figure like a glove, and her hair was of that particular shade of red which in our fathers' time was strictly taboo, and in our own sets the minor poets crazy.

Whitmore was not an impressionable man, and had never been what is called a ladies' man, but he was suddenly conscious that this girl's interesting and unusual face would haunt his memory inconveniently. Personal attraction—as he afterwards explained, perhaps a little pedantically—is a fungus growth in speed. It does not, like an oak tree, require a century to mature.

The first thing this personally attractive girl did was not customary in the etiquette of golf—or elsewhere. She arose leisurely from the bank, and went over to where the ball lay on an open patch of sod that was free from the surrounding and luxuriant bent and bracken in which vast numbers of golf balls, like sheep,* had gone astray. The girl carelessly picked up the ball Whitmore had played,

examined it leisurely, and with a languid interest. Dissatisfied apparently with her find, she threw it carelessly into a clump of rough grass, where it was as effectively lost as if she had flung it into the sea. Whitmore was astonished, and indeed sufficiently irritated to resent the young lady's action, if he admired her appearance.

"Pardon me," said he, when he came up; "did you see a golf ball?" He bowed and raised his cap with as much grace as a soft tweed permits. The keen air and the exercise, or other cause, had brought a slight colour to his usually pale face. He was too slight for his height, but that would probably be remedied when his health was restored; and he really had a distinguished manner, in fact as well as in the opinion of the Inniskerry girls. This young lady, however, if she observed his distinguished manner, did not appear at all impressed. Her reception of him was rather eccentric.

"Yes," said the girl in answer to his question, staring him straight in the eyes as she spoke. "I saw a golf ball. And I threw away a golf ball."

It was certainly embarrassing.

"I am sorry you did so. It was—er—the last I had left." This statement was strictly in the nature of a fib.

"I hoped so, or I should not have taken the trouble to throw it away."

It was not very easy to answer this either.

"So that now I cannot finish my round," he remonstrated.

"So that now you cannot finish your round," she agreed affably.

Whitmore did not know whether to be amused or amazed. The girl's manner gave him no help. She betrayed no feeling whatever. She did not appear embarrassed: hardly even interested. Inniskerry was not precisely a social vortex, but unconventionality so extreme is unusual anywhere.

"What then am I to do?" he asked vaguely.

"Do nothing," she replied. "It is better to do anything than to golf. And it is better to do nothing than to do anything."

"Very neatly put," Whitmore agreed, looking more closely in the girl's face. Under this more intimate examination the expression which had seemed curious became almost weird. The warm tinge in her hair caught the sunlight and shone in it—a harsher critic might say, flamed in it. Her manner was absolutely placid. She was neither insolently self-possessed, nor in the least degree ill at ease. But her eyes were strange. Whitmore was entirely puzzled and frankly fascinated. He tried to manufacture some commonplace remark which would simplify the situation, but could think of nothing. Meanwhile they both moved on a few steps in the direction he would have gone if he had not lost the ball, or she had not thrown it away. The girl had

fallen into step with him. It seemed the most natural thing in the world—as she did it.

“But like all these merely verbal smart things,” Whitmore recommenced, with a conscious effort to shake off his embarrassment ; “what you said would sound just as well turned the other way round—It is better to do anything than nothing. And it is better to golf than to do anything else.”

“Quite so,” she agreed. “It would sound just as well, only it would be nonsense. But that does not matter, does it ?”

“Not in the least.” They were now at the next tee, so, to create a diversion, he grumbled again, ignoring her curious generalisation :

“If you had not thrown away the ball, I could have gone on with my game.”

“You can do so still, if you wish.” She opened a small hand bag and threw out three new golf balls. “That’s more than ‘shent per shent’ on your outlay,” she observed imperturbably, and was turning away.

This, he discovered without much effort, was not agreeable to him, so he gathered up the balls and handed them back, saying : “Of course I can’t take your property ; and—er—I don’t want to go on with my game. My defence of it was purely dialectical—a rebound from what seemed to me the harshness of your attack upon it. I do not really care to play—just now. Let us walk together.”

“I am not going back ; and if I were, I would not go back with you.”

Notwithstanding this outspoken speech, there was nothing really rude in the girl's manner. It was certainly within her right to walk no farther with a stranger, but it was hardly within her right to cut short even an informal meeting to which so far she had tacitly assented. But the remark was made with the air of one merely stating a simple, and not necessarily offensive, fact. The riddle was becoming harder to read.

"I have offended you—" he was beginning lamely, he felt, when she interposed:

"Not a bit. But you don't interest me. I thought you would, or I should not have thrown the ball away. Good afternoon!"

"We shall meet again—"

"Not if I can help it."

On that she strolled off, crooning to herself a low wailing snatch of a song. Her voice was exquisitely soft, liquid, a contralto of the purest quality, and the elfin weirdness of the snatch she crooned had more impressiveness in a couple of phrases than many an orchestra achieves in a couple of hours—more of that indescribable, almost unrealisable emotion which, since the world began, has been voiceless through the countless centuries, and even yet is wrapt in the mystery of music. Some day the tomb of that magic may be opened, but thus far no man has been able to roll away the stone.

The silence, otherwise unbroken save now and then by the soft "sish" of the drowsy

sea, rendered the witchlike wail more telling, and the loneliness of the scene suited exquisitely the song. The girl stood for a moment on a bracken-swathed sand-bank, silhouetted against a flaming sky, for the sun was now low in the west. She waved her hand carelessly to him, and with a pleasant little nod, as of long acquaintance, passed on. Whitmore stood a few moments after she had disappeared, and then went slowly to the hillock on which she had stood. Even from this eminence he could see nothing of her. She had vanished.

Below the bank the shore lay close, and the blue water was frothing round the wrack-tapestried rocks that lay awash, and pouring therefrom in hissing sheets flecked with great flakes of foam, till it spread with a long low gurgle on the ribbed sand. Away beyond the headlands, far out to sea, tall rocks stood up clean cut against the sky, as they have stood these thousand centuries, facing the west, sea-drenched sentinels of the deep—on guard!

This, and the "creepy" feeling in the presence of a human being who is not "right," from which even a brain specialist may not always be immune, helped out the effect of the recent almost unearthly singing, which still seemed to croon in the rustle of the great grasses, and whisper in the sibilance of the sea. That persisting cadence tormented Maurice Whitmore for many a day.

CHAPTER III.

THE SANATORIUM.

WHITMORE returned to the village in a reflective mood. He had still a long evening before him, and was already aware that the resources of civilisation had not, all of them, got the length of the hotel in Inniskerry. He was restless, bored, lonely beyond expression, and, what was more unpleasant, he felt that he was going to be seriously ill. Mackenzie's rough diagnosis was not far wrong. The worn-out man had not been picking up as fast as he ought. It is true that a temporary exhilaration had resulted from the actual journey from town. The long lonely drive from the railway station to Inniskerry, which traversed the wildest moor in all Connemara, was so new to him that he forgot his own health in the abstraction of the novelty—quite the best tonic for a man in his condition, as he himself well knew. After the interminable streets it was a glorious change to the wide undulating plain, which stretched far out on every side, a lonely prairie without human habitation, and hardly a sign of either beast

or bird. He had given himself up to the spell of unrelieved desolation, and afterwards his pulse had quickened with excellent hygienic results when at last the Atlantic shimmered on the horizon. That had passed, and he knew it.

Whitmore indeed had not been as well as usual—which was only indifferent—for some days. That evening he was distinctly worse. It was exasperating to think that he had thrown away valuable time in so wretched a place, and had not gained in health an equivalent for his loss in cash and professional advancement. The London epidemic was furiously raging, and the death-rate might as well have been normal for all the good he was getting out of it. Lastly, he could not get the girl out of his mind. If last in the list of his troubles, it was not least. But for that, at the moment, all the rest would not have mattered—or could have been borne. The house suffocated him. He went out of doors.

The weather had now completely changed, and the evening was cold and threatening. He did not care. He must get away from that miserable hotel, get the air, get a sight of the darkening sea, get out of himself, his own moody vapours. And all this could be achieved as well by the road the mad girl had taken as another. Why therefore should he not walk in the same direction? There was no reason. He did so without delay.

Whitmore walked quickly over the deserted

links. It was late in the year for visitors from distant cities who came to Inniskerry to golf and recuperate after long holidays abroad ; and the local people who were still in the first enthusiasm of their novitiate, had gone home for the day. It was also nearly dark when he came to the place where the strange girl had left him, and it was with difficulty he found a lightly-marked path which led along the beach for a few hundred yards and then turned inland. This was the direction in which she had gone, and most probably the road by which she had travelled. Let her way be his way.

Walking very quickly, his mind occupied with various matters, including doubtless the girl, Whitmore paid no particular attention to the landmarks he passed, nor to the rapidly failing light. But his interest was aroused, with an uncomfortable jerk, when he put his foot ankle-deep in a flabby quagmire, and found, when he recovered himself on firmer ground, that night had fallen, and a dark night too ; that he must now be several miles from the village ; and that he had lost his way—at night, on a Connemara moor ! It was not reassuring. But it would serve no purpose to stand there considering the measure of his own folly in leaving the ills he knew for this unknown calamity. He started again resolutely.

After a long aimless tramp over the heather-clad peat, in the hope of finding his way back to



" There, with a tall candle in a tall candlestick, . . . stood
the mad girl of the links! "

El Dorado]

[Page 31

Inniskerry, Whitmore landed at last on what seemed to be a county road, and he had not walked far on it till he discovered what was apparently the entrance to the avenue of a country house. There was no gate, indeed, but even in the darkness he could make out the ruined pillars which had once supported one. There might be no house ; or, if there were, it was probably deserted, and, *ipso facto*, haunted. That did not disturb him, so he turned into the avenue. Any house would be better than the road-side.

This rough lane was not long, and at the end of it Whitmore found a house, to his great relief. Was it inhabited by persons or spooks? To determine this, he took a strong pull at what seemed to be the handle of a bell. A light soon showed through the glass panes over the door, a chain rattled ominously, a key creaked in the lock, and the door opened. And there, with a tall candle in a tall candlestick, held high above her head, her splendid hair framing her striking face like an aureole in the dim light, stood the mad girl of the links !

And simultaneously there flashed into Whitmore's brain the true diagnosis of her case. It had been troubling him sub-consciously all the evening, even when he was floundering at large upon the moor, with every prospect of having to spend the night upon it. Now it was clear. Her face had the unmistakable symptoms of a newly discovered, or

newly differentiated, form of cerebritis which at that moment was puzzling the best brain men in town. Eureka ! he would have cried, but the word died within his lips. For what was it that he had found ? Nothing certainly which he wished to discover. It may seem singular to you, if you are a brain specialist, that Whitmore was so inept, so slow. But then you have never, fortunately, been in his poor health or have never met a girl exactly like Marie Reinitz.

The girl makes a difference, even in a diagnosis.

"This is my second unwarranted intrusion," Whitmore began, in the most natural voice he could command ; "and this time I have lost something more important than a golf ball. I am very sorry to trouble you, but I fear I have lost my way. Should I trespass too far if I asked permission to come in and rest for a little ? "

"You are very late," the girl replied coldly, ignoring the apology. She held the door open for him, and as she closed it after him added, "What kept you ? " She spoke without a trace of feeling, as carelessly as the most phlegmatic farmer's wife could to a husband who had over-stayed his market half-holiday by half an hour.

For a moment he did not answer her. Her extraordinary way of saying the most unexpected things as though they were the most obvious commonplaces, hardly carried off so

complete a surprise. He looked at her, perfectly nonplussed. She gave him no help, but stood apparently awaiting his explanation or apology. Whitmore was not observant, in fact, absolutely unobservant, of that finesse in ladies' costume which appeals to, and is done justice to by, a society reporter or an amateur man-milliner. Yet he was able to discern that the girl was very becomingly dressed—as attractively as in her outdoor gown. And although she did her own hall-porter duty she was certainly a lady—in the most strictly conventional sense—in everything except her curious conversational vagaries. He stammered rather helplessly, and after one or two false starts managed to say :

“ You—er—expected me ? ”

“ Of course I expected you. You might have found your way sooner, too. But now that you are here I suppose I must not scold you, even though you do deserve it. My father is waiting for you.”

“ It's very kind of him, I am sure,” Whitmore murmured, determined to take no notice of anything, however extraordinary, the girl might say.

“ This way, please,” she continued, and just then the host, who was so courteously waiting, appeared at a cross door toward the back of the hall. He was an elderly, grey-haired man, with a slightly foreign look, and a face burned almost black, appar-

ently by the sun. There was not a trace of *bon viveur* in the colour, and although he was past middle age, or looked it, there was no want of energy, either in his movements or his manner. He was certainly a cheerful contrast to the neurotic girl who claimed to be his daughter. But there was no time to examine him very closely, so Whitmore followed him to the study, with only a half-formed feeling of relief in the evidence that heredity might be counted out of this case—even if that complicated it.

"The idea," cried the host, when Whitmore had re-stated his misadventure, "of your trying to reach Inniskerry to-night is absurd. You will stay where you are. This is not my house, but while you remain in it you are my guest. The house itself, it may amuse you to know, goes by the imposing name of *The Sanatorium*. It belongs to a worthy gentleman whom you will meet to-morrow. He is a retired naval officer, who, on leaving the Service, hit on the happy idea of turning his lively ancestral seat on the shores of Lough Sheelin into a Sanatorium. He has been waiting for me, it appears, some fifteen years. For I am his first visitor. I shall probably be his last."

They had exchanged names by this time, and Mr. Max Reinitz seemed in every respect, save one, as frank a stranger as Whitmore could desire to spend an hour with. The respect in which he was reticent was precisely

that in which Whitmore would have wished him confidential—his daughter. But that could hardly be wondered at, and certainly could not be helped. Meantime, Mr. Reinitz was not long in finding out a subject on which he and his guest could meet on common ground. He was as enthusiastic an archæologist as the London doctor, but with this difference: while the latter had always been a hard-working stay-at-home, who only trifled with the subject in his slight leisure, the former seemed to have roamed the world around for the sole purpose of pursuing it. With this limitation against him, Whitmore said little, and allowed his host to do nearly all the talking. This arrangement seemed to suit both.

To criticise too closely so excellent an host would be ungracious, Whitmore felt; but more than once, notwithstanding his own unaffected modesty, which was as natural to him as his scholarly bias, he would have preferred if Reinitz had not made haste to qualify certain chance remarks betraying a somewhat intimate knowledge of his guest's achievements in the science which was dear to both. It would have been more flattering to Whitmore to learn that his own archæological fame had reached the ears of a world-wide traveller in ordinary course, as it might easily have done, than to have the circumstances explained away, with a certain confusion too, as though a solecism had been committed.

And this Reinitz often did. Some of his explanations, indeed, were not easy to follow, but Whitmore did not challenge them, in consideration of the general mystery which characterised his visit. When Reinitz left the room for a minute with some trivial apology, he summed up the situation thus: "The daughter said she expected me—but she might say anything in her unhappy case. The father takes pains to disclaim all previous personal knowledge of me—but manifestly had expected me." It was very puzzling. Was he landed on a modern equivalent of the *Arabian Nights*, as the reviewers say, or was his own brain—Steady! That would never do.

The guest retired early and slept ill. There was much, apart from the unanswered question he had asked himself, to keep him awake. The wind wheezed and whined in a melancholy refrain that always cried the same thing. The woodwork of the windows clamoured incessantly. There was a sudden rush of raindrops on the glass. And then against a pane a loose frond of ivy kept tapping—tapping! It was exasperating. And that girl!

Sleepless, and weary of the interminable consideration of the girl's case, which he could not dismiss from his mind, Whitmore arose, dressed, drew up the blinds, and looked out on the most eerie sight in all the world—a Connemara lough, dark and drear, surrounded by mountains over which the clouds were

flying fast, and fitfully lit by a blear-eyed moon that blinked out whenever the ragged curtains flapped.

Standing at the window, Whitmore heard a sound in the corridor off which his room opened, a sound which startled him. It was late for anyone to be moving in a house where all had ostensibly gone to bed hours ago. Yet this was certainly a footstep, and it was as certainly a stealthy, surreptitious footstep—this that was coming his way without, most evidently, any preventible noise. The boards creaked; the footsteps stopped—moved on again—closer now to the door—and ceased. The handle was tried.

The lock was rusty, and the bolt jarred harshly. It was not forced further for a moment. In that moment Whitmore thought fast. He was no coward, but his nervous system was unstrung. There was something surreptitious about the house itself, and all the circumstances under which he found it. He was anxious, if unafraid. Again the door was tried, and the rusty bolt groaned. No other sound disturbed the silence of the house.

Outside, Lough Sheelin moaned.

CHAPTER IV.

LOST ON THE MOOR.

WHITMORE waited with his heart beating faster than was normal, notwithstanding he had often in his professional duties looked Death in the face without flinching. Then the door opened slowly—and Marie Reinitz stood on the threshold.

"Miss Reinitz!" he exclaimed astounded, but he took care to keep his voice to a whisper.

"I cannot properly apologize for my presence here," Marie said in the absolutely emotionless voice which Whitmore had already noted as a symptom. A faint streak of moonlight from the window showed that she was dressed for walking.

"I know," she continued, "that with many no explanation would excuse my apparent immodesty. But you will understand. My father's mind is unhinged. He is mad!" She began to tremble, and her agitation increased until she became nearly hysterical. At last her exasperating indifference had

passed. That at least was something to be thankful for. She was more human now.

"My father!" she gasped, looking back over her shoulder, as though she feared to see him standing in the corridor. "He is not my father. I would have told you this morning on the links—that was really why I stopped you—but somehow you did not seem to care. I must tell you now. I am compelled to call him father. I am a prisoner here. It is a strange sanatorium! It is—my God—a private asylum! He is the keeper. I am not mad. I will tell you all when there is time. I am in danger here. Will you help me? Will you rescue me?"

"Indeed, I will rescue you," Whitmore soothed. He must humour her for the moment. She would be rational again after a short interval. "And you will tell me how I shall begin on this rescue work."

"You can take me away from here. Save me! I am sick with terror!"

"You must not talk in that foolish way," he said in a sharper tone. Her hysteria if not controlled might become violent, and she would alarm the house. And then—oh, well!

To pacify his patient, as he now regarded her, Whitmore followed her downstairs and along the hall to the front door. Passing a stand, he took a heavy great-coat from it, to keep up the pretence of flight. Her mood

would change. She would forget her present whim in a moment. But in a moment they were outside the door and it had swung to, and fastened itself automatically. It happened so very simply, so completely, as it were, of its own accord—yet it made such a difference. To get back now he must really alarm the house—and servants will talk!

Marie, much quieter in her manner since he seemed willing to aid her, assured Whitmore in the most natural and credible way that she had not exaggerated the conditions of her captivity. And she knew the road to Inniskerry. The mail car started early for the first train at the distant railway station. She had money. She had friends. He would be well paid for his trouble, and also earn her lasting gratitude. It was impossible to disbelieve so plausible a story, led up to, as it had been, by circumstances so unusual. Her singular manner on the links might only have been adopted in the hope of interesting him, or it might have been an outcome of her malady. In any case, to go back to the house, or get back into it, must create a situation of extreme difficulty for all concerned. How really should he account to the girl's father for his part in the episode? And how did he know the man was her father? There was not a trace of family resemblance. There was not an atom of evidence that the girl's present story was false—or, it must be admitted, true. But she began to tremble

again and betray growing agitation while he hesitated. That settled it. There was nothing for it but to march.

They turned sharply away from the dreary lough on the shore of which the house was built. The wash of its troubled waves was soon lost in the whistling of a rising wind, which chilled them through, although they walked fast.

"I am still rather frightened," Marie whispered. "But this is the right road. It is so dark, do you mind if I take your hand? This way!" She locked her fingers in his and clasped them closely. Her indifferent mood had indeed changed—for the better, he thought.

The strange girl now talked as freely as though she usually took her walks abroad in the dead of night, hand in hand with a rising London physician. He gave way to her caprice, and held her hand—firmly. Even in the darkness the girl's fine carriage was apparent. And her voice when she spoke reminded him constantly of that eerie singing by the sea. If only she were sane, or could be cured! If this story of hers—on which, by the way, he was acting—could be implicitly relied on! If indeed his own brain was as clear as usual! Whereas it was clouding pitifully. He could not think consecutively. He could not reason rationally. That serious illness which had threatened so long now bared the sword to strike. Still he need not

forestall the blow. It would be time enough to meet it when it fell. He accepted the absurdity of the proceedings, therefore, with resignation, put away out of his mind all thought of the demon of disease which he knew was stalking himself, and resolutely took no thought of the morrow. His fancy, unchecked by his sense, soon began to weave pretty fictions round this hapless but marvelously attractive girl. Her case, no matter how it might develop, would win sympathy from a stone—and her implicit trust in himself was delightful. He was brought back somewhat suddenly to the domain of fact by an observation from her. She remarked affably :

"We are off the road. I have noticed it for some time."

They had indeed been ploughing over rough ground, when he came to think of it. The pale moonlight had been drowned by thick banks of humid cloud hurried up by the still rising wind. It was again pitch dark, and they were lost on the moor—one of them for the second time that night. That fact was sufficiently portentous to postpone all fictive imaginings.

"Yes! My boots are wet through," she continued again in the distressingly indifferent manner, which he disliked as a man and feared as a physician; it was a bad symptom. Plainly, she was madder than he thought, and her story was the merest moonshine. It

might be, but it was too late now to think of that. The "case" had lost no interest, but the sodden peat was undeniably disagreeable. They moved on in the hope of striking the road again, but they went quickly from bad to worse. Soon every step was ankle-deep in the saturated turf. Their boots were nearly pulled off as, with a disheartening "sough," they dragged their feet step by step out of the quagmire. It was very cold, as well as wet, and Whitmore felt that in every condition but one this second losing of the way was worse than the first. Happily that condition kept very near to him—and continued to hold his hand in the most friendly way. But over the man the fell sensation that he was making an ass of himself was gaining strength. What would Mackenzie say? He would certainly hear about it before he was five minutes back in Inniskerry. Mackenzie could not keep so good a story to himself if he tried—and he would not try. London would have it nearly as soon as Inniskerry. It was maddening. They marched on.

Towards dawn the darkness deepened, for the moon was gone. The cold became more intense. High overhead, curlew cried, and around, the melancholy wail of a circling pee-wit helped out the loneliness which was sufficient by itself. Physical exhaustion was beating the girl. Her curious prattle, which had been maintained in spite of all discomfort,

waned and ceased. Her courage followed it. She was faint with fatigue and perished with cold.

"Let us rest here," Whitmore said at last. "You are worn out; a few minutes will refresh you." He was dead beat himself. His exhausting life in town was a poor training for such a journey. And he could no longer disguise it from himself—the avenger was near. But he did not tell the girl that.

"A few minutes!" she repeated in a hopeless voice. "A few minutes and I shall be dead."

He shuddered, but spoke cheerfully, to give her heart.

"No, no, you must not say that. You are faint with fatigue. It is simply physical exhaustion which makes you despair. You will be brave again when you have rested. Be brave now, for"—he had to say it to galvanise her failing energy—"my sake. Remember it was you who brought me into this."

"I remember," she said quietly. She did not qualify her answer, but she did make a gallant effort to march on. He saw what it cost her to do this, and he would fain have taken her up in his arms and carried her. But the truth was he could not have carried her a yard, for his own strength was in its last lap. They struggled on somehow, not very fast. But at least they did not give in.

At last they stumbled on some rough shelter and got in the lee of it. The bushes

were ragged and thin, but they kept off the weight of the wind. Besides, that any shrub should grow there went to prove that they must be nearing the end of the interminable bog. They waited for daylight without speaking a word, or little more than a word.

They were too numbed to think or speak. But the man took off the great-coat he had worn so far, simply because the girl could not have carried it, and wrapped it carefully round her. It was so much too large that, buttoned in the ordinary way, it would have hung too loosely on her to be much of a protection. But there was a belt on it, and with this he succeeded in drawing it close enough to shield her well from the bitter air. She nestled to him cosily now, like a sleepy child. He clenched his teeth that she might not hear them chatter.

Thus the night went slowly by. At last a long grey streak stretched over the moor. The day was coming, but they did not stir. Voices sounded in their listless ears. It must be a rescue party. That thought did stir their frozen faculties. They were saved!

"What in heavendther hes bin spraghlin' in the ba-ag?" said the first of the welcome voices.

"Begob, it must hev bin the ould moily cow. She got in wan night afore, an' be me sowl she threvelled tin mile if she wint a shtep, an' her nivir out ov the same acre ov groun'.

It must hev bin her again, for there's the four feet-marks," said the second voice.

"Thin bedad!" said the first voice, "she must hev bin threvellin' side-ways, for them thracks are all thegither. It's niver the cow at all, at all."

Marie Reinitz started like a frightened hare, and with flashing eyes and flaming cheeks, and skirts knee-deep in mud, stood off—at bay!

In a dull stupefied way Whitmore realised that, whether his mind or body had been wandering all night, he was now leaning against a hedge on the other side of which lay a kitchen-garden, quite evidently belonging to the Sanatorium hard by. And that Miss Marie Reinitz appeared to be inexcusably angry, after all his tenderness and loyalty—and also undoubtedly sane.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE CLIFFS OF CROAGHAUN.

WITH better fortune than he expected, Whitmore recovered from the brief illness that followed the exposure and fatigue of the night on the moor. Reinitz was indefatigable in his attentions. He sent to Inniskerry for the doctor's baggage, which was reluctantly given up by the hotel people, and duly installed him at Lough Sheelin. Captain and Mrs. Dangan seemed pleased rather than troubled by this addition to their duties. Where indeed, they asked, should a sick man be well tended if not in a Sanatorium? Mrs. Dangan was a pleasant, motherly, and sensible sort of person, whose only ineptitude was a belief as strong as faith in her husband's great mental superiority. On every other topic she was perfectly normal. The invalid noticed with great satisfaction that she entertained a sincere affection for the strange girl, Marie Reinitz.

"A good child," she would say, "a real good child, only she has too many 'capers.'"

But that's the fault of those who brought her up—wild."

It was gratifying to Whitmore that Marie's good qualities should thus be declared inherent, and the responsibility for the "capers" placed elsewhere. The Captain was not less favourable in his testimony. Indeed, he professed great regard for both Reinitz and his daughter. The former, no doubt, had shown himself to be a man of good judgment in his selection of the Sanatorium for a retreat from the world of worries, but the Captain spoke well of his guest's heart as well as his head.

"Most extraordinary man, Reinitz," he said to Whitmore confidentially. "A very clever man, as I am sure you will have observed, but a perfect gentleman too, which is not always the same thing. Very extraordinary man—most extraordinary."

Marie he described in his reiterative manner: "A most agreeable girl, but a little peculiar. Takes her own way a bit freely; but no harm in her. Not a bit. Peculiar girl, but most agreeable. Very fond of her myself—most agreeable."

As the days passed, and Whitmore's strength increased, Mrs. Dangan evidently regretted the early termination of her nursing employment, although she insisted that she was glad of his recovery. The old Captain, too, was frankly delighted with him, and already had begun to plan the addition of a new wing to

the Sanatorium to cope with the rush of London visitors who would flock to Lough Sheelin on hearing Dr. Whitmore's evidence in its favour. Meanwhile, Mackenzie's prolonged absence was unaccountable. The *Aileen* had not been seen in Inniskerry since the day Whitmore watched her sail away. His adventure therefore was so far safe.

When the invalid was nearly well, Reinitz had a short conversation with him on a subject which had previously been practically taboo, that of his daughter. Marie had kept somewhat carefully out of Whitmore's way, but he was not surprised at that. Their escapade on the moor was too recent and ridiculous for the girl to ignore it completely. To refer to it would be equally embarrassing to him—and surely to her. Her mental condition had been one of extreme anxiety to him for some time, Reinitz explained, but he was glad to say she was then much better, and would, he felt assured, soon be completely restored. He did not intimate more exactly from what she suffered, nor how long she had been indisposed. He would go into the matter later when Dr. Whitmore himself was quite restored.

"The most extraordinary feature," Reinitz said, interrupting himself a moment to cast an admiring glance over Lough Sheelin, by the shore of which they were walking, "is that, while she was really recovering at the

time, the final necessary stimulus, or shock, would seem to have been supplied by the sight you presented—so dreadfully ill and bedrabbled—that morning when you were brought in, temporarily crazy after wandering all night on the moor—*alone*."

As Whitmore did not comment on this, Reinitz stopped in his walk and said sharply: "You remember that?"

"I do," Whitmore answered gallantly. His statement of course was not the whole truth, but the prevarication was pardonable.

"You have no recollection, I presume," Reinitz continued pointedly, "of leaving the house in that somnambulistic fit you must have had?"

"I—er—seem to have a vague recollection of leaving the house," Whitmore demurred.

"Then it was delirium instead of somnambulism, as I thought."

"Yes, that was it," Whitmore agreed hastily, and with relief. He had boggled at the lie direct even to help Marie out of the mess, but a little quibbling, he hoped, would be forgiven him. "I was really—er—not responsible—for myself."

"I quite understand," Reinitz said with sympathetic courtesy, and, it may be added, with perfect truth. Then he changed the subject, and it was not alluded to by either of them again.

Whitmore was now strong enough to take

longer walks than that by the shore of the lonely lough. But he really had not the energy to return to his professional duties, and, meantime, had settled down quite naturally in the Sanatorium as the guest of a man he had never seen before he stumbled on the house the night he lost his way. Reinitz affected to see nothing unusual in the matter. He brushed away all the doctor's apologies, and refused to listen to his expressions of regret. In this he was supported eventually by Mackenzie, who hurried to his friend's side as soon as he returned from a cruise, the length of which had far exceeded the limits he contemplated. Another matter which gave the doctor a subject for mild surprise was the excellent terms on which Mackenzie and Reinitz found themselves soon after the stockbroker's arrival. Reinitz frequently interpolated trivial reminders that they were perfect strangers to each other prior to this episode, but they certainly could not have appeared more intimate if they had known each other all their lives.

Mackenzie also seemed to find his way about the Sanatorium with curious ease for a complete stranger. And he became bosom friends immediately with Captain Dangan. Mackenzie himself did make some show of formality, but the Captain was slapping him on the back, and calling him "Mackenzie" in the first half hour. They had a drink together in the first five minutes. This, how-

ever, was not surprising, for the Captain was a hospitable man, and they were both of the temperament which the Captain somewhat importunately claimed for himself. He could either take a drink or leave it alone, he constantly declared, with creditable emphasis; but he invariably took it, he might have added.

"Captain" was a courtesy title, or term of endearment, unanimously applied to the proprietor of the Sanatorium by all in the neighbourhood. His seafaring days were a far-off memory, and he had never got beyond the humblest commissioned grade. On coming into the small property on which he resided, he promptly left an unappreciative Service and returned to his house on the shore of Lough Sheelin. He was a simple, good-hearted man; rather stupid, perhaps, but courteous and gentlemanly in an old-world way that had won him many friends, and if he had a slight partiality for the wine of the country, it had never made him an enemy. He still clung to what he considered the way they had in the navy when he served in it. But his point of view, and, they said, most of his reminiscences, were purely imaginary. He was still, theoretically, a great martinet, and made believe that no man could go comfortably to sleep save by gun-fire, or bugle-call, or some other similar soporific.

The first day he came over from Inniskerry, Mackenzie brought the doctor out for a stroll

round the lough. A footpath ran round the whole circumference of the lake, and this was a deservedly popular pleasure for the Sanatorium folk. They walked leisurely, as was becoming, in view of the convalescent's condition and the charming character of the scene. Lough Sheelin on this occasion was looking its best under an evening sun, and the mountains surrounding were all clothed in purple and fine colours. It was a pleasanter picture than the one Whitmore had looked out upon the night when he first saw it. The contrast, indeed, was extreme.

"I want you to come into Inniskerry with me on Thursday next," Mackenzie said, as they sauntered lazily on. "I have been golfing again, and have made a match with a Dublin man. The whole country-side are coming to see it. It will do you good by way of a change from the Arcadian monotony of Lough Sheelin."

"Golf ! Golf ! What do you mean ? What about your arm ?"

"What's the matter with my arm ?"

"The accident !"

"Oh, that's all right. It's better now," Mackenzie explained hastily, and in some confusion, the occasion for which was not very apparent.

"It's soon better for an arm that was as good as broken. Let me see it. I may have to forbid you to play." Whitmore turned toward Mackenzie in perfect sincerity, but

the latter waved him off, and said with a laugh:

"No, no, I'm as right as ever. I am as hard as nails. You don't get me on your list for a bit of a sprain—once it is better."

"That's the worst of you big, hardy men," Whitmore grumbled. "You never know you're hurt till you're past mending." He did not insist on his examination, and Mackenzie went on to tell him the details of the match so far as they had been arranged, ending with a naïve remark:

"Besides, it may be the last game I will play for many a day—" he broke off, and added with more hesitation than the triviality seemed to warrant—"I mean for this year—this season I should say—takes up too much time—may give it up altogether. A busy man can't keep abreast of every sport. I was thinking of dropping golf altogether."

"It would be a big drop—for you," Whitmore assented. He agreed to make one of the crowd at the match, and the matter was dropped. Mackenzie soon after left for Inniskerry.

Whitmore's strength came quickly back once he had passed the dead point at which for a time he seemed blocked, and before long he could only pretend to be an invalid, with painstaking persistence, in order to afford himself an excuse for a continued study of the interesting case presented by Marie Reinitz. While still absorbed in this

problem (with more than purely professional zest), he added one day yet another surprise to the list which was constantly growing more formidable since he first met the girl on the links.

He was climbing, or mountaineering, among the cliffs which lay on the sea-coast south of Inniskerry Bay—a long walk from Lough Sheelin, but he was quite strong now—and he came on to a steep ridge of naked rock which marked the boundary of local exploration at that point. What was seawards of those cliffs no man knew, for no one in living memory had ever dared so dangerous a climb, and at that point, for good reason, the boats kept out to sea. With the cliffs of Croaghaun for a lee shore the most skilful mariner could not have too much sea room, and the hardest mountaineer drew the line at their sheer precipices. Vague stories still floated in belated tradition of smugglers' caves and the like relics of the brave days of old, but these were wisely accepted without further evidence than what could be supplied by the grandchildren of the men who knew the tales to be true, or said they did.

This was enough to accentuate Whitmore's spirit of adventure, which only smouldered under the veneer of a successful London physician's fixed habits. He climbed the cliffs, at the risk of his life, and established thereby a reputation which will pass on from generation to generation at Inniskerry. He

also made a discovery which he is not likely to forget as long as he lives. Sheer down from the edge of the precipice over which he peered—so sheer that a pebble disturbed at the summit would fall like a plummet into the water—lay a rock-bound lagoon, ending in a fringe of golden sand at the inshore end, but elsewhere pulsing in slow heaves against the vertical rock faces which enclosed it. Seaward, a narrow entrance closed in so close that one looked out on the ocean, as it were, through a gigantic porthole. Here, surely, was the old-time smugglers' harbour of refuge. And, indeed, herein a hooker might have hidden from a navy.

All this was as it ought to be, and as natural as the white gulls whirling and wheeling on scarcely-moving pinions far down below, forming and reforming in ever-changing mosaics on the air. But—Whitmore rubbed his eyes, and asked himself aloud could he be dreaming—lying placidly at anchor, in that strange harbour for such a ship, there was as fine an ocean liner as ever sailed the seas. Not the mammoth size, perhaps, of some of the newest floating cities, but in splendid trim—brasses shining in the sun—decks snow-white—boats glistening with new paint—lines like a yacht!

This vessel lay close to the further side of the lagoon, and in a bend which, whether intentionally or not, effectually hid her from a seaward view. As the coast at the place was

avoided by small craft owing to the precipitous cliffs round which a heavy sea was always running, and as the larger vessels, which passed, perhaps, once in a couple of years, kept well out from land, it was plain that this particular vessel might lie at her present anchorage till she rusted into scrap iron without anyone sharing Whitmore's discovery. This did not, perhaps, concern him very closely, but he immediately made another discovery which did. Two little specks—they seemed little dots at the distance—moved on the steamer's bridge. Could there be persons on board? There were.

Whitmore carried a powerful binocular glass slung over his shoulder, and this he speedily brought to bear on the figures. There were two—a man and a woman. The man, from the gold lace on his cap and cuffs, was certainly an officer of the ship. From his bearing, and a certain proprietorial air, he might be the captain. That did not matter either. But while he and the woman walked the bridge, very much at ease, there was a camaraderie in their manner which did. After two or three turns of the bridge, the woman made as if to leave it. But, remembering an omission, it would seem—which was so carelessly remedied, the remedy itself must have been habitual—she held up her face to be kissed. Dr. Whitmore was horrified at this shameless proceeding, and justly aggrieved. His reticent nature detested any public display

of affection. Railway station kissing, even between women, he would make a breach of the law. There must be lots of people on board, even if he could not see them, and for a woman to kiss the captain of a ship on his own bridge, in presence of his whole crew, was surely indelicate. For this woman it was an atrocity.

This woman was Marie Reinitz.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST OF THE EXPEDITION.

WHITMORE returned very tired after his long excursion, and in an extremely surly humour for a man of his amiable temper. Marie did not get back to the Sanatorium till late in the evening, when Mackenzie drove her over from Inniskerry. How she got there was another element in the mystery which was rapidly deepening round everything Whitmore encountered in this extraordinary holiday. She did not join the company at dinner. Her absence was not unusual; indeed, it was habitual. Whitmore had hardly spoken to her since their escapade. He had not sought to thrust himself upon her when he found that she was avoiding him. But he must do so now. It was now plain that Reinitz did not fully realise her irresponsible condition, and he himself was so placed that he could not warn the father without playing the part of, as he felt, a mean informer on the girl. But something must be done. He would speak to Mrs. Dangan. Better still, he would speak to the

girl himself. He had no opportunity that evening. This worried him, for the matter was urgent. There was no time to be lost.

He found her early next day rambling on the favourite walk close by the house. The morning was bright, and the wind that was rippling the surface of the lough was not cold for the late autumn season. Marie was very nicely dressed, he thought. The plain sailor hat needed no adornment further than the splendid hair it rested on supplied; and the light blouse and dark skirt were effectively contrasted. It was the style of the latter which won a strong encomium from him, worded in his best academic manner:

"Women who wear draggling skirts are of a low cerebral type."

As a generalisation, his view may be correct, but it is probable that Whitmore was unconsciously biassed by the fact that Marie's skirt was not long enough, by an appreciable degree, to draggle; and that her bootmaker, like her tailor, deserved very little of the credit for the presentation of an extremely neat effect. He had come to accuse her, and he felt mean and miserable when she, hearing his step, turned and gave him a pleasant little nod, and a civil greeting. He thought, too, there was a shade of welcome in the dreamy depths of the big blue eyes. This would not do. He must harden his heart against them, or he should never get through his task. His face darkened. She met him with an open countenance,

FIRST OF THE EXPEDITION. 61

and apparently a heart that was free from guile. Such hypocrisy was deplorable in a girl who had so recently been guilty of a grave indiscretion. He began a few conversational commonplaces to gain time to re-shape his address, which, notwithstanding much careful preparation, had suddenly got confused. These she cut short with a directness that disconcerted him.

"Well," she said cheerfully, and without paying the least attention to what he had been saying, "what is it?"

"I climbed the cliffs of Croaghaun yesterday," he answered bluntly.

"You—climbed—Croaghaun!" She dropped some wild sprays she had been gathering, and faced him in wide-eyed astonishment. He even thought there was an alarmed solicitude in her expression, but he set no store by it. The girl was a consummate actress as well as an adventuress. He would not trust her. He continued coldly:

"And I was extremely pained——"

"Then you should not have done it."

"But I could not help——"

"You could have helped," she again interrupted sharply.

"Seeing——"

"Oh, I thought you meant climbing."
This with relief.

"The steamer——"

"Isn't she a beauty?"

"And the bridge——"

"It is easily seen."

"And you——"

"Yes, I was there."

"And the man——"

"Oh! that's the trouble, is it? Well, let me advise you—it is rather impudent of me, I suppose, to advise a famous London doctor—don't worry about the steamer—or the bridge—or the man."

With that she blew him a kiss and went toward the house. His earnest advice could not well have been more effectually declined, nor his well-meant intervention a greater failure. Such a handsome girl she was too! and what a stupid way to seek to advise anyone—blurting it out as he had done! No wonder she left him. He stood looking after her for a minute, and then walked away, making the complete circle of the lough before he returned to the Sanatorium. It was only when he got back he recollected he had left without his breakfast.

At lunch, to which Whitmore brought the appetite of a convalescent who had forgotten breakfast, both Mackenzie and Reinitz were silent and pre-occupied. Reinitz was usually undemonstrative, but Mackenzie's manner was a novelty. Marie, who did not appear, sent an apology. She was drinking afternoon tea with Mrs. Dangan. It was very early afternoon, but it served for an excuse. After repeated attempts to interest each of his friends in turn, Whitmore applied himself to

his lunch with zest, and found it an efficient, if temporary, substitute for their society. In the afternoon the three men went shooting wild duck on the lough, with considerable success from a sporting point of view ; but two of them were still reticent—brooding. This want of confidence on the part of Mackenzie was not very complimentary, but Whitmore would not try to force a confidence. If his friend did not care to consult him, by all means let him keep his own secret. On reflection, Whitmore found that this breach had really been between them during the whole of this Inniskerry visit, notwithstanding Mackenzie's often boisterous cordiality.

Finding his companions thus constantly and oppressively pre-occupied, Whitmore let his own mind drift back to the web which this commonplace sick-holiday was weaving round him. Reinitz he made no pretence to understand. The man was cosmopolitan in habit of thought and practical experience. Otherwise, there was an impenetrable veil behind his hail-fellowism through which Whitmore, whom he treated with exigent solicitude, had not yet for a moment been permitted to peep. The daughter he could not comprehend, for the simple reason he had not yet rightly diagnosed her case. But Alexander Mackenzie was the most exasperating enigma. A man who had always been frank to the degree of boyishness, suddenly and successfully assumes an Adelpheic dissimulation ; he pre-

varicates ; he is full of small insincerities, and descends to subterfuges ! This was the most difficult problem. It did not come easier by thinking over it, so Whitmore at last dismissed it—for the time.

Game was plentiful, the lough swarmed with waterfowl, but the sport was half-heartedly pursued. Whitmore noticed that while Reinitz was unselfish in the matter of claiming his turn, he shot well, and rarely missed his bird. Mackenzie's eye was out, metaphorically, that day, and Whitmore himself had been too busy a man ever since he took his degree to keep up his practice. The sound of the firing was therefore more formidable than its effect. They did not miss everything, however, and when the boat was liberally strewn with empty cartridge cases, and four or five pair of wild duck had fallen to their guns, a return was ordered. It was soon hastened by a coming shower, which swept down from the mountains, and darkened the lough as suddenly as if the sun had been switched off. They were drenched through before they got back. When Whitmore had changed, he found the others seated comfortably before a fine fire, which Reinitz had ordered in the dining-room, although the season was hardly yet due for that significant advance-agent of our long winter.

"This being my last evening under your care, Mr. Reinitz—" Whitmore said abruptly, as he came into the room, in order to focus

the theatricality of the situation. They would either tell him what they were hatching, or tell him they did not mean to tell him. Reinitz interrupted him, as he anticipated, and said, with hospitable warmth, but without more decision than was consistent with good manners :

"Your last evening ! I trust it is only one of your many last evenings ; that they will be as many as the farewells of a departing operatic star."

An instantaneous glance passed between him and Mackenzie. On the part of Reinitz the glance, liberally translated, meant, "Is he in earnest ?" On the part of Mackenzie the glance replied, "He's always in earnest—better go on now."

"I'm afraid it is positively my last appearance," Whitmore persisted. "I am quite well—better than I have been for a year. My partner writes that my absence is a loss to him, which it is very good of him to admit, and I have absolutely no excuse for robbing him of his share of the value of my services. I am greatly obliged, as I am sure you will believe, for your kindness. But I must go to-morrow."

Reinitz again telegraphed by a glance : "You guarantee that he is safe ?" and Mackenzie glanced back : "If I didn't, I would not have brought him here." On that Reinitz conveyed in the same telegraphy, "The responsibility then is yours," and said pleasantly to Whitmore :

"I am extremely sorry to hear it. What must be will be, and it is an old and sound philosophy to accept the inevitable. This being positively your last evening, I must show you something which will interest a man of your tastes, and may be of interest to your Society in London. But that will keep. Meanwhile, as we have a high authority for maintaining that there is a time and place for every thing, I think the present an excellent time for dinner, if the fates—personified in Marie and Mrs. Dangan—are propitious. We are to dine *en famille* this evening; all together. But the Dangans are good souls, and won't worry us."

The personified fates were quite ready, had indeed been waiting for the signal rather impatiently. Everything was being spoilt, they said. But that was an exaggeration, for the dinner was excellent. When the men had the room once more to themselves—the old Captain leaving with the ladies—Reinitz rummaged about among a pile of portfolios, found what he wanted, brought it forward to the fire, and spread it out on his knees. It was apparently a map drawn by hand, and never passed through a printing machine, but executed with extreme care as to the drawing. Whitmore admired it politely, and waited for the explanation he had been promised. Mackenzie never looked at the map at all, but watched the other two with an excitement that must have been

FIRST OF THE EXPEDITION. 67

noticed by Whitmore if he had chanced to look his way.

"A well-drawn map," Whitmore remarked, with tepid interest.

"A map which will revolutionise scientific thought on the archæological and geological planes. The man who by its aid gives the treasures it charts to the world will make his name immortal."

"Now you're talking, Reinitz! That wakes you up, Dr. Whitmore," Mackenzie roared, and slapped his thigh with his huge fist. He drank a tumbler of punch at a gulp, poked the fire with enthusiasm, and guffawed: "His last evening! Oh yes, his last evening! Why not! Go on, Reinitz."

Whitmore looked from one to the other and then anxiously at Mackenzie. The whisky was really a powerful spirit, and Mackenzie had drawn on the decanter with unusual liberality.

"Don't mind him," Reinitz interposed, with an amiable smile. "His enthusiasm is natural—considering the nature of the knowledge he shares with me. We are practically the only two in the world who share it. There are others who are partially informed. But they do not count—for various reasons."

"You think then of widening the circle who possess this—extraordinary—secret?" Whitmore said coldly. He was really tiring of abnormal conditions. Either his own brain must be softening, or all the people he

came in contact with—including his old friend—in this unique Sanatorium were clearly crazy.

"We do," Reinitz answered, without a trace of either mystery or feeling in his voice. "We think of sharing our knowledge with a third person—with in short, yourself."

"That's the idea," Mackenzie shouted.

"We certainly thought of including you," Reinitz said, slowly rolling up the map. "But of course we shall not thrust the knowledge upon you."

"The knowledge, the knowledge! What on earth is this apocryphal knowledge you are talking about?" Whitmore cried. There was an acerbity in his tone the others did not miss. Mackenzie laughed again as if he enjoyed his friend's impatience.

"The knowledge of what that map represents," Reinitz answered, rolling up and throwing it into a corner carelessly, as though the subject had begun to tire him. Mackenzie was still chuckling and hugging himself in an imbecile way that Whitmore found positively exasperating.

"In heaven's name, and in plain English, Reinitz, what are you talking about?" Whitmore asked again.

"About the map, of course," Reinitz returned, with an elevation of his brows which plainly put the matter conversationally out of court. Whitmore refused to recognise the rebuff.

FIRST OF THE EXPEDITION. 69

"Of what then is it a map? If you did not mean to tell me, why did you introduce the subject at all?"

"My dear Whitmore, I have been trying—not very successfully—to tell you. But between your scepticism and our friend Mackenzie's enthusiasm, I have not had a very favourable opportunity. That map was made by me. It is a district north of—one of the Guianas: it does not matter which. Let it be British, French, or Dutch, as you please. In that district I have discovered relics of a civilisation which, by comparison, modernises the Pyramids, and makes Babylon a thing of yesterday. It can wait half an hour. I will tell you all about it. I have some letters to write." He arose and strolled leisurely from the room. At the door he stopped and said airily, "Back in half an hour. Mackenzie will describe some necessary preliminaries."

"What do you know about it? What have you to do with it?" Whitmore demanded, interested, excited even, in spite of his previous doubts.

"I! Oh, I have nothing to do with it. A mere bagatelle! Not worth mentioning except between ourselves."

Mackenzie had been pointing these explanatory remarks with furious lunges at the fire. He stopped this suddenly, threw down the poker with a crash on the hearth, and said seriously, indeed impressively, "There's to be an expedition—fame beyond the dreams of

archæological avarice are for you, if you join us, and of course for Reinitz. He will deserve it, for in addition to all the solid risk there is in the thing 'on its own,' he will be bothered"—he paused for a moment, and said very slowly, "he will be worried by the responsibility of that mad daughter of his. It seems if he goes—*she goes*." When he had given this last information time to bite in, as he himself expressed it, he continued:

"As for the expedition, I don't see what I'll get out of it, bar the fun of it. I have really nothing to do with it as you infer, nothing but the simple, insignificant, paltry fact that I'm—" He jumped to his feet and squared himself in a triumphant attitude. Then he said slowly:

"I'm finding the money for it."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SIGNING OF THE BOND.

WHEN Reinitz returned to the room he gave a clear and very circumstantial account of the discovery he had made in a hitherto absolutely unknown land. He had penetrated, he maintained, a region untrodden by the feet of man for many thousand years, but which had once, he had found ample evidence, been the seat of a vast population, of a civilisation which, he believed, antedated the authentic records of mankind. The contemplated expedition would exhaust what he in his first journey had only examined. Dr. Whitmore's recognised position in London would guarantee the *bonâ fides* of the evidence with which they would return. His testimony would be accepted, and displace any possible charges of chicane. Antiquities of the first water, it is well known, can be manufactured in Birmingham as fast as they are required on the Nile. This expedition, not only from its cost, but from the enormous difficulties in its execution, could not afford to return with no more tangible result than the accumulation of material for

magazine articles, or sensational fiction, and so on.

Whatever Whitmore's impressions may have been, when the matter was first mentioned, his interest certainly quickened in it as the long and apparently trustworthy narrative proceeded. Only one thing troubled him. He felt that both Reinitz and Mackenzie were most anxious for him to join the expedition, were doing everything in their power to present it to him in its most attractive aspect; yet he also felt intuitively, but no less certainly, that they were not perfectly frank with him. They were keeping something back from him—principally, the exact nature of their anxiety that he should join them. An opportunity soon arose which confirmed him in this view.

"What we require, therefore, to begin with, is a first-class steamer," Reinitz said. "That is not to be picked up for a song, but neither are our specimens of the earliest architecture and industrial implements in the history of mankind to be brought home in a bandbox. We require a large vessel."

"I know where the very vessel that would suit you is lying, at this moment," Whitmore interpolated. It was a bow at a venture, but it found its mark. Reinitz and Mackenzie exchanged startled glances, and Reinitz continued hastily:

"Ah, at London or Southampton, doubtless: but our commission is in good hands,

THE SIGNING OF THE BOND. 73

and the vessel will be forthcoming when required."

"Good!" said Whitmore to himself. "I have scored a point. They do not wish me to know where their ship is; and they do not know that I know where she is."

Reinitz was very convincing in his statement, notwithstanding some cracks in his argument, and when Whitmore asked himself what possible surreptitious motive could either this stranger or his own most intimate friend have in prevailing on him to join an expedition on which they were risking their own fortunes, he could find no sensible answer. Mackenzie's temperament was undoubtedly sanguine, but in matters of money, or in matters of so much money, he was by no means a fool, as many a skilful operator on 'Change had found to his cost. But the whole scheme was so bizarre—the fitting-out of a purely private expedition at enormous expense in the hope of adding only to the world's store of academic knowledge—he could not at the moment give it the serious consideration the others seemed to expect. As they were, however, all talking in a circle, each man returning infallibly and regularly to his own particular point of view, they decided to postpone the discussion till the next day, and separated for the night.

Whitmore sat down in his own room for a final pipe before going to bed, and while smoking it, he hurriedly reviewed the situation. His

professional career would certainly be sacrificed. The public mind is short, and he could not disguise from himself that, whether his reputation was rising as fast as his friends maintained, it would be to make over again from the first when he returned from this mysterious expedition—if he ever returned. The risks were many, and a man's life is always an insecure tenure. No doubt, great fame would accrue if one half of the promises Reinitz made were fulfilled, but then, as a mere matter of balance, a certain portion of fame was his at home for the winning, with but small proportion of the risks, and few or none of the inconveniences. And, again, who was this man Reinitz? If he was perfectly straightforward, or straightforward in any degree, why did he maintain such secrecy over his nationality? He and his daughter spoke English perfectly, but with a slight trace of foreign accent, and neither ever gave a straightforward answer when he pointedly asked them, as he had often done, to what country they belonged. Mackenzie, too, frankly admitted that he did not know where they came from. His own best interests therefore would surely be served in avoiding an enterprise which presented so many elements of a suspicious nature. It may be thought a poor spirit in which to weigh the immortal honours of a pioneer's renown, but the pioneers who never calculate their own direct or indirect advantage are not abundant.

He would not go.

There was little said about the great enterprise next morning, and nothing definite during the day. Mackenzie was staying a few days as a visitor at the Sanatorium, and he and Reinitz had evidently agreed to give Whitmore time. On his part, Whitmore had already made up his mind, but something happened to disturb it. He was walking late in the evening on the pathway by the lough shore. Darkness was coming on, and the loneliness of the place was depressing. Passing an old and rather picturesque ruin close to the shore, he came to halt with the abruptness of a drilled man. From the top of a broken ivy-buried wall, standing up black against the last of the light, which was now passing quickly away, he caught a sound that made his heart quicken. It was the weird song that Marie had crooned that afternoon on the links, and the first glamour of the singing was not lessened by the scene in which it was repeated. The water of the lough, in the deep shadow of the mountains around, was dark as ink. The hills themselves were pierced by great gorges which yawned portentously in the deepening gloom. The night was sweeping down their huge sides like a palpable presence. And the singing!

Whitmore gave but one more thought to the question which had been troubling him all the day, and the answer came flashing back. He said it aloud ;

"Where this girl goes I will go ; and my career may go to the devil."

Marie was intractable when he spoke to her, but he induced her to return with him to the house, if she did not do so with the best grace. It was plainly his duty as a doctor to look after the girl's health when her own father did not seem to trouble about it. Yes, he must surely go on the expedition if she went. It was his duty. He would discharge it. Meantime, as they walked back by the shore of the lough, that was now beginning to moan its lonesome dirge in the evening breeze, he said very seriously :

"Miss Reinitz, will you tell me something which it is right that I should know, but with which the others—your father and Mackenzie—do not seem willing to trust me—do not perhaps think me sufficiently worthy of trust—"

"Oh, they trust you very much. They think you are so trustworthy that they very properly won't trust you—for the present."

"I do not pretend to follow your meaning," he said coldly, "but perhaps you will tell me—you are of course in their confidence, going with them ; with us I mean ; why did they not confess about that steamer ? That is their vessel, I have not the slightest doubt ; the vessel I saw you on in the bay under the cliffs of Croaghaun. It is to her Mackenzie has been making all his mysterious yachting trips. When they trust me in anything, why do they not trust me in all ?"

THE SIGNING OF THE BOND. 77

She stopped in her walk and faced him, saying more seriously than he could ever remember her to have spoken, almost since he first saw her, albeit her remark was as exasperating as any he could remember from her—which is saying much :

"That steamer is another effort of your far too lively imagination. It is not the first sensational flight of your very remarkable imagination. You remember that ?"

"I remember much that is sensational," he answered stiffly.

"Then put it all down to the same cause." She commenced to croon over the curious snatch of song he knew so well, and appeared careless how her flippant remark had struck him. He was hurt and offended with her, and walked by her side a hundred yards without a word ; nor would he have spoken to her again uninvited. She did not seem to notice this for a time, but presently she ceased the crooning cadence and looked furtively at him. He did not turn his eyes to her, but he was conscious of her glance. They went on another score of yards in silence. Then, when the constraint was becoming so awkward that he knew he must presently end it in some way, Marie stopped again, snatched his hand suddenly in both her own, and cried in a low beseeching voice, and with pleading eyes that went to his heart :

"You heard what I said. You are a good fellow. Let it go at that—for my sake !"

"Anything ; for your sake," he whispered.

On which she dropped his hand, resumed her walk, and dismissed the subject, resisting adroitly his efforts to return to it. They reached the house without any better understanding.

In the hall he asked before he let her go :

"Does Mrs. Dangan approve of your going on this extraordinary expedition ?"

"Mrs. Dangan does not approve."

"You do not then value her advice ?"

"On the contrary, I value it highly. Mrs. Dangan deserves more than a daughter's respect from me. But one does what one must, rather than what one wishes."

"But you have not considered"—he stammered, and his sincerity touched her—"a young girl—alone—among a lot of men—"

"My father will be among the lot of men also," she interposed. "And, for the rest, I can chaperon myself. It would not be the first time." With that she left him.

"It would not be the first time," he repeated to himself—the words cut like a knife. He remembered many little tricks of manner and speech which seemed to bear out what she said—that she had been thrown greatly into the society of men. She walked with a longer step than most girls. She usually omitted the "Mr." when speaking of a man. "Mackenzie told me," she would say bluntly. Her frankness often gave piquancy to her manner. He had grown accustomed to it,

THE SIGNING OF THE BOND. 79

and at heart he would not have it changed, even though it often exasperated him. But—"I can chaperon myself," was a wrench.

That night, after Whitmore had announced his intention of joining the expedition, an impressive ceremony was carried out in the Sanatorium—the signing of a bond prepared by Reinitz. In this he set forth very clearly the aims, destination, and possible, if not probable, results of the great enterprise. This, it was hoped, would ultimately repay the party in a pecuniary way, as well as from a scientific aspect. All such profits as might be derived from the sale of curios, specimens, etc., the publication of essays or books, the receipts from lectures (a long list of possible benefits followed), should be divided equally, share and share alike, among the signatories to the bond.

There was only one reservation in favour of the original discoverer, namely, that anything found which could be classed amongst the monetary metals or precious stones should be his exclusive property. It may seem a large pre-emption, but remember the unlikelihood of its being necessary to put it in force. As there were neither mines nor minerals in that section of the country, the exception was regarded as a mere formality, and no value was attached to it. The bond was a carefully prepared legal instrument, drawn to withstand the attack of the most astute King's Counsel, should any party to it prove unfaith-

ful to his trust, and try to get more than his share. Toward this end it must be witnessed by disinterested parties. The cook and a housemaid happened to be at leisure, and this office fell to them.

The Captain, being the senior in years, was offered the honour of signing first. Whitmore could scarcely believe that, after all, the whole matter was not a huge practical joke, when Dangan told him that he was joining the syndicate. But then that steamer lying under the cliffs at Croaghaun was more than a joke. He expressed no opinion whatever therefore, when the worthy old fellow confided the news, adding :

"Mrs. Dangan—most capable woman—will be quite able to manage the Sanatorium in my absence—most capable."

This was not unlikely. The Captain had the parchment before him, and a pen in his hand, when the witnesses came into the room. Mrs. Slavin, the cook, immediately assumed that the document was the Captain's will, and wiped her eyes sympathetically on her apron, saying in a low voice :

"He's niver been the same man since the night he fell aff the brown mare—an' him in spirits. May the heavens be his bed ; he's breckin' up fast."

Mrs. Slavin was promptly closed, but the housemaid, a young country girl, was overcome by the melancholy associations of such an occasion and wept copiously. This moved

THE SIGNING OF THE BOND. 81

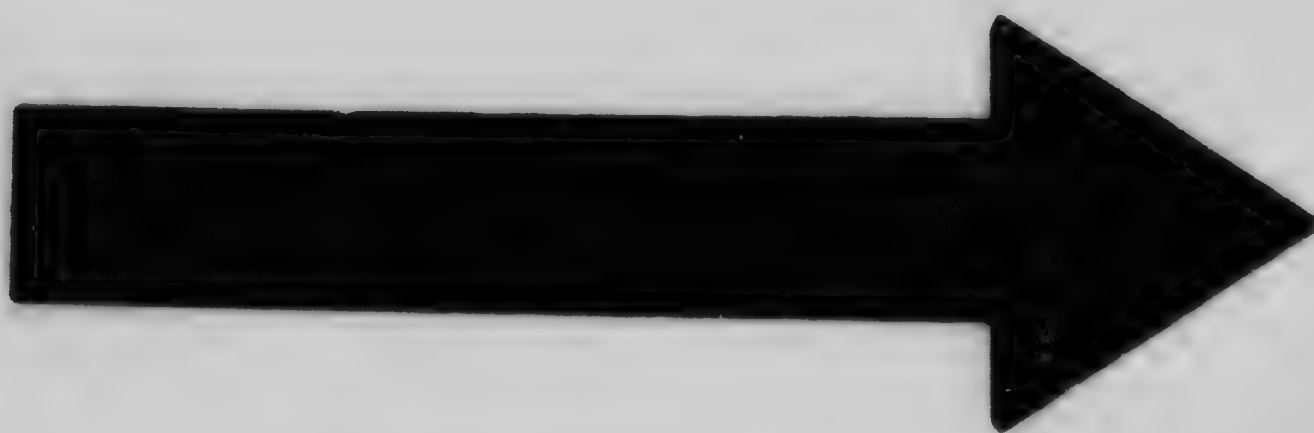
the Captain to wrath, and, Mrs. Dangan and Marie being both absent, he used language suitable to the navy in his time, or the army in Flanders at a prior epoch. For this he afterwards, as a magistrate, fined himself half-a-crown to each aggrieved domestic.

When all was over, Mackenzie cried out in a bantering tone, "All gold and silver, coined or otherwise, is your little perquisite, Reinitz?"

"Yes, all; don't you wish I may get some?" Reinitz answered.

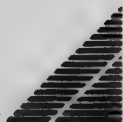
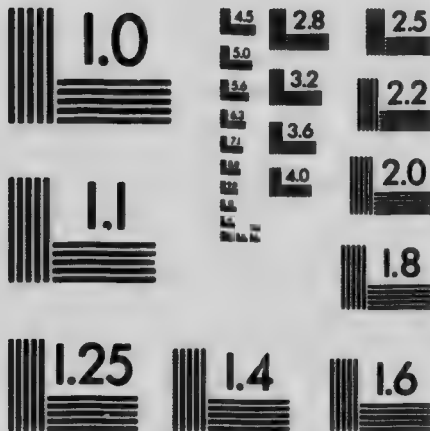
"You might dig up an old coin or two."

"I might," said Reinitz.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street 14609 USA
Rochester, New York
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

CHAPTER VIII.

GOLF AMONG THE GRAVES.

THE preparations for so important an expedition could not, of course, be completed in a day. While they were being pressed on, Mackenzie's engagement for the golf match matured, and he saw no reason to abandon it, notwithstanding the weighty matters on his mind. Whitmore drove with him to Inniskerry, and leaving the trap at the hotel, they went directly to the golf links, where they were already due. At this time golf at Inniskerry was still so recent an innovation it required some strength of character in a man to carry a bag of clubs across the Market Square, which, with true Hibernian paradox, was a triangle. As Mackenzie, with his bag slung over his shoulder, and Whitmore went down the street, their appearance was noted with the usual friendly interest by the village ladies, and commented on impartially by two of the volunteer custodians of the public amenities.

"I declare to me goodness, it's worse nor

the crickets," said Mrs. Branagh, the baker's wife.

"Ay, the crickets was bad enough, but they're clane daft about this fool game," Mrs. Cassidy agreed. Mrs. Cassidy was the relict of a hard-living draper, and carried on his trade very successfully after his decease.

The two were ruthless critics, as cordially detested as they were openly courted. Few ventured to incur their displeasure, and no one presumed to do so on behalf of a couple of strangers, who, however popular, were "here to-day and away to-morrow." "The crickets" was their term for England's national game.

"Troth, an' he's a brave lusty man, that Mr. Mackenzie," Mrs. Branagh conceded, with unusual moderation. "They say he makes iviry sowl in the hotel full when he stays there."

"They don't need much pressin'," Mrs. Cassidy considered. She leant more to the physician. He was such a "clane," handsome man, had such an illigant way with him, and so forth, concluding:

"He's the well-mended man since the day he come to Inniskerry, annyway."

"Ay, he is that," Mrs. Branagh agreed, and then in a portentous whisper, she added "They do say them blacks on Mackenzie's boat are rale cannybals. An' that's the raison he nivir lets them ashore, or takes an Inniskerry man aboard, barrin' ould Tre-gellis, that he hes tuck up with so much."

"Dear bliss me, Mrs. Branagh, isn't it tarrible that a gintleman wud hev annything to do with bastes like them when he cud get honest men to do his work. He'll nivir hev luck—" and so on.

This view was strongly supported, but long before the matter had been fully discussed the two gentlemen, who had unconsciously suggested it, were on the links, where a large crowd had assembled to follow the match—the most important event of its class since golf had been established in Inniskerry. As the match, or the circumstances attending it, had some influence on this story, we must join the "gallery."

Whitmore left Mackenzie amongst a small knot of the more enthusiastic sportsmen, and strolled off by himself. He happened by chance to come on the aged Bernard Gildea, and stopped to hear what he had to say. Bernard was explaining the subtleties of the game to a couple of Scots ex-champions who had struck Inniskerry by chance on a walking tour. Undeterred by the bad end of the aphoristic worm, they had got up betimes that morning to see the course, only too pleased thus to keep in touch with a civilisation which they had already begun to miss. At that moment they stopped to be instructed by Gildea in the game as it ought not to be played. Whitmore thought he might pause for a moment without being considered intrusive.

"See thon hill," said Barney, pointing to a bunker seventy yards away.

They saw it.

"Well, they'll hit it a blinge and knock it over the tap of that hill at the first skite—iv they don't miss it."

"And how if they do miss it?" one of the strangers asked.

"Begob!" said Gildea, "an' sure some ov thim won't be afther sindin' it aff the lock ov san' at all. But his honour (Mr. Mackenzie) won't be doin' that annyway. Be heavendther, ye can't see the ball at all whin he knocks it out ov sight!"

This credential to Mr. Mackenzie's skill was naturally satisfactory to his friend Whitmore, and he and the Scots were turning away, when the spokesman asked what Gildea thought of the weather. There was a covert sneer at Irish weather in his voice that was hardly justifiable in a Scotsman. Happily it passed Gildea unobserved. He answered promptly:

"It'll be dry. There'll be showers. But there won't be anny rain."

The day eventually turned out bright if cold. Occasionally a sharp shower swept in from the west and fell in glistening lines, behind which a double rainbow flamed for a minute and passed. Under foot, the firm sand kept dry, and it was only on the dwarfed heather-patches that any moisture remained. Gildea's forecast was therefore correct, if not expressed in meteorological terms. His para-

doxes, like most of his countrymen's, were more owing to a difficulty in translating Gaelic idioms into English speech than to any mental confusion.

For the first nine holes the course lay so close to the shore that a sliced ball was liable to run down a steep place, and, like the Gadarene swine, perish in the sea. Inland there was an extensive warren, in which overpopulation and the housing question already occupied, it was believed, the attention of the elder rabbits. It required, therefore, some dexterity—and a large number of balls—to play a round in a reasonable time. Mackenzie and the Dublin man were both frequently in trouble in these difficulties, and when they left the sea, and turned almost directly inland, the match was even.

The Dublin man led for the next three holes, and when playing to the fifteenth he was still two up. Mackenzie had hard luck more than once. But all that is in the game. He did not lose his temper, and never complained. No good golfer ever did, he maintained. It is to be hoped he was wrong in that, or we might all give it up. A mishap here occurred to the stranger which helped to even the match. Playing with extraordinary care from the tee, he missed the ball clean, and, in a fine frenzy, smashed the shaft of his driver across his knee, violently throwing away the pieces, to the great satisfaction of a number of small natives, who felt that they were now beginning

to appreciate the significance of what had hitherto appeared an inexplicable pursuit.

"An' what for," Gildea, who was carrying for Mackenzie, said in perfect good faith, "wud yer honour be bothered breckin' the sticks yerself? Sure the boy'll nip them for ye." Then to the stranger's caddy, who had an exasperating trick of standing anywhere but in the proper place :

"Why don't ye stan' behind him, an thin ye'll always be before him."

And then, as one of our novelists used to say, with damnable iteration, a strange thing happened. From a long drive Mackenzie got an ugly kick, and his ball, with a tremendous rebound, disappeared into an old and long disused burying ground. There was nothing in this plot except a few old walls to mark where the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept. Still, it had been a trouble to the Green Committee of the Inniskerry Club—for golf among the graves savours of irreverence. As, however, no previous player had ever got there, the original course, in the plan of which it had been overlooked, was never altered.

What would Mackenzie do? Lift his ball and give up the hole? Whitmore, more keenly interested than he could have believed possible before the match began, asked him his intentions.

"I'll play my ball," Mackenzie answered shortly. He hardly knew who had spoken, so intent was he on the game, notwithstanding

those weightier matters which might well be occupying his mind. But that was his method. He went heartily into anything he undertook till he was through with it. Hence his success—on 'Change and elsewhere.

"Even if it's in the graveyard?" Whitmore inquired almost nervously.

"Man," said Mackenzie, in a determined voice, his long forgotten native accent returning, as it will with intense excitement; "A'd play it aff the steeple ov a church!"

Whitmore here noticed Marie Reinitz in the crowd which followed the match. She had not said a word about coming when Mackenzie and he discussed the matter in her presence that morning. Yet here she was, walking and talking with, so far as he knew, a perfect stranger, a dapper, well-dressed little man, who carried himself with an air. The girl, then, must be madder than he thought—but this was not the time for a further consideration of her case. He waited anxiously for Mackenzie's next move. He had not long to wait. The ball was lying clean—but on a grave! And it must have been a royal one, for we Inniskerry folk were all kings in the old days. But the times are out of joint, and now we are no better than our neighbours.

Mackenzie selected a heavy driving-cleek from his bag, for there was a long carry over rough ground which must be made certain. If the ball fell short, the hole was lost. And that meant the game lost, for the Dublin man,

by a fine second shot, had recovered nearly all his advantage, and altogether his temper. Whitmore held his breath while Mackenzie addressed his ball. Bernard Gildea was nearly as anxious, for he could remember when a man would have been thrown into the nearest bog—perhaps shot—for an offence less sacrilegious.

But alas, the good old customs are passing away !

Mackenzie kept his eye resolutely on the ball ; the cleek went back over his shoulder, not so very slow ; it swept round in that perfect circle possible only to a master. A click, sudden, sharp, and true, told that the ball was properly hit. It flashed fast and far and low, dead straight for eighty yards ; then with the hum of a hundred honey bees, it soared up and sailed joyously on the bosom of the air. Brackens and bunker and brook safely passed, it dropped like a nesting snipe ; trundled up to the fifteenth green, and lay four feet from the hole. All Inniskerry roared a hurrah, and even the Dublin ranks could scarce forbear to cheer. There is something strangely exhilarating in the flight of a ball. It is a joy that was strong when the world was young, and it seems to have grown no older with our circles round the sun. It may be an inheritance in little from Mother Earth herself, which is only a big ball spinning in space, the Ptolemaic system and ex-President Kruger notwithstanding.

"Dem lucky. But it's not playing the game. It's not—er—cricket!" It was the man with Miss Reinitz who said this. He dropped his eyeglass with an offended grimace as he spoke.

"Naw, Mr. Meyer," cried Mackenzie with flashing eyes. "It's no' cricket, Mr. Meyer. But man it's—gowf!"

The last word went with a snap. He had paused before it, as if to use an expletive, but refrained. 'Gowf' could not be qualified. This was the turning point in the match. Mackenzie won on the last green.

Whitmore went away by himself to the beach, now that he had leisure to consider a less immediate but not less pressing matter—Miss Reinitz and her escort. The man's face was unknown to him, but there was something in his carriage, in one or two trivial mannerisms, he seemed to know—how, he could not tell. His careless attention was caught by a yawl with a lug sail putting out. He watched it dip into deep troughs, then rise again, and so on till, like a big brown bird, it faded into the white-flecked blue of the ocean. The gulls flew low, skimming the waves, stormy petrels of that coast, crying as they flashed past. Weather-wise shore fowl, out for the day, were packing up and starting for long flights inward to marshes well sheltered by the mountains. It was a bad sign for those who go down into the sea in fishing boats—and so often remain in it.

GOLF AMONG THE GRAVES. 91

"I know where I saw him now, and where Mackenzie met him," Whitmore exclaimed aloud. He turned away from the sea and walked quickly toward the village. He had not gone far when he met Marie and the stranger. They stopped, and Miss Reinitz introduced the man. Whitmore muttered some suitable conventionality and the other man did the same. "Stranger, like myself, I understand," the latter murmured in a pleasant voice by way of something to say.

"Yes," Whitmore agreed, "I have never been here until this visit, and you, I presume——"

"Just home from abroad."

"Have only left your ship," Whitmore added, without paying attention to the interruption.

Reinitz and Mackenzie, both of whom had just joined them, exchanged one of those telegraphic glances of which they were liberal. The stranger, too, seemed put out. Marie retained her self-possession perfectly.

"My ship!" Where do you suppose my ship to be?"

"I suppose her still to be in that bay under the cliffs of Croaghaun. She was there when I saw her," Whitmore assured him pleasantly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST NIGHT ASHORE.

AFTER the match, Mackenzie and Whitmore dined together in a private room in the hotel. The public room was crowded, and both men wished to be clear of strangers for that evening. Now that the excitement of the match was over the camaraderie which it created seemed to have cooled. Whitmore was more reserved, and Mackenzie less boisterous than usual. Conversation flickered and went out. The pause that followed was painful, for the silence of the private room in which these two friends were dining *tête-à-tête* was unpleasantly disturbed by the social enthusiasm of the public room, the din from which was powerful. At last Mackenzie snapped out :

"You seem to know a lot more than you—er—pretended about this expedition, Whitmore."

"I know very little about it—too little, considering that I have agreed to go on it."

"Well, you know about the *Argosy* at all events. You did not think the circumstance

worth mentioning when we were unfolding our plans."

"What, by the way, is the *Argosy*?"

"The steamer at Croaghaun which you must have discovered by some telepathic or thought-reading process."

"There was nothing telepathic in my discovery of the vessel. I saw her—"

"Saw her?"

"I saw her from the summit of the cliffs," Whitmore said irritably.

"I am not doubting you," Mackenzie explained, "but I should not be more surprised if you said you saw her from the summit of Mont Blanc. How did you get to the top of Croaghaun? Flying machine?"

"No, I climbed it," Whitmore replied shortly.

It was plain that Mackenzie was still only trusting him partially, notwithstanding the gushing way the expedition had been announced. Mackenzie and Reinitz must have been long in collusion. Mackenzie's pretence of being a stranger at the Sanatorium must have been assumed, for some object not yet explained. The mystery of the steamer was now increased by the mystery of her captain — a man of the world, a gentleman in command of a fine steamer, *hiding* in an unknown creek on an unfrequented coast. What could all this mean?

Whitmore would have preferred to be trusted implicitly or left altogether outside

the confidence of the colleagues—or conspirators. He had begun to explain his views on this when Mackenzie interrupted him, saying very seriously :

“Now listen to me, Whitmore. There isn't anything in the nature of a joke in this expedition. Each man has a certain duty to do, for which each has special qualifications. You have your work cut out for you, and you will do it well. I have mine laid out for me, and I will do it as well as I can. I could not help you in your work, you could not help me in mine. It was not my intention to consult you in many of my arrangements on the ground that, while you could not help, you were likely to hinder. Forgive me for speaking so frankly, but that's just how the matter stands. There are necessities in it which your non-commercial conscience might make trouble over. Mind, I don't admit that because your conscience is non-commercial it is anything the better of that—merely that it is apt to boggle over non-essentials ; to strain at the tiniest gnat, while complacently swallowing vast droves of camels. There is a semi-secret about the *Argosy*. So far we have kept it well. With this object I got rid of my own crew on the *Aileen* and manned her with Lascars from the *Argosy*, who cannot speak a word of English. You remember the day one of them ‘escaped,’ as I might say. But he told no tales, for a good reason. You would not have been told about the *Argosy* had you not

discovered her yourself. I mean you would not have been told that we have been keeping her here in hiding, have changed her name, and altered so that her own builder would not know her. Now that you have discovered her it can't be helped ; and it makes no difference, or very little difference."

This was a serious speech for Mackenzie, whose oratory was usually more robust than elegant, but Whitmore could see that it was all in earnest. Every word of it was evidently sincere. Nevertheless, when one begins to doubt one's friend's sincerity in any matter, one grows quickly, if by unconscious degrees, to doubt the friend in all. Happily the doubt had not yet spread far, so Whitmore said in a more agreeable tone :

"I am afraid it does make a difference, Mackenzie. But I shall not insist on a greater measure of your confidence than you care to give. Meantime, I anxiously hope that you are not implicating yourself in any questionable way with this man, Reinitz, whom I admire rather than like ; of whom I know nothing further than his own claim—to be an adventurer. I am convinced he has some purpose in view other than we know of—than I know of. But for myself I intend to make the voyage, and there's an end to it. Afterwards I shall act as circumstances may suggest. Meantime, I'll worry you no further about the mysterious necessities of your department of the enterprise."

For a moment Mackenzie looked as if he would blurt out the whole of what he admitted he was keeping back. But he changed his mind, and said, with a regretful shake of his head :

“ All right, Whitmore. It is better so.”

Thereafter the subject was dropped for a long time, and when it was revived, all the circumstances connected with it had altered comprehensively.

For some days after this, all the expeditionists,—or conspirators, as Whitmore was beginning to consider the whole party, including Mackenzie—were busy preparing for a lengthened absence. The little telegraph office in Inniskerry was never in such request, and the girl in charge had her hands full. By general request, Whitmore worded his telegrams to his chief, and others, in such a manner that while they were wholly without wilful deception, they gave no real indication of the scope of his travels, or what port he would sail from, or for. All outfits, packages of necessities and personal comforts for the voyage, and the like, were put on board the *Aileen*. When she was loaded up, Mackenzie made a secret voyage to the Croaghaun Bay and put her cargo on board the *Argosy*, then back to Inniskerry for another load, and so on. Many trips were made thus, and soon everything that an experienced traveller like Reinitz could suggest for the general benefit was done. His own and Mackenzie's arrange-

ments had long since been made. Tregellis had resigned his post and signed on for the voyage. Whitmore had the curiosity to ask him if he thought it was wise to give up a permanent post, which he might not find open for him on his return. Tregellis looked surprised at the simplicity, if not stupidity, of such a question from the London doctor, for whom he had formed a sincere respect. He answered simply :

"Captin's goin', sir."

That, in his opinion, answered all such questions. Captain Dangan's lightest word was law to Tregellis, and his most glaring ineptitudes as Holy Writ. They had both learned their profession on the same battleship. That was enough.

Whitmore got a more sensible explanation when he asked Mackenzie the meaning of such bizarre additions to the *personnel* of the expedition as the Captain and Tregellis.

"They are very little good, certainly, but absolutely no harm. Reinitz likes old Dangan and I like Tregellis. They both know as much about nautical business as will make them worth their room. Our crew are all Lascars ; our officers are foreigners, who, with the exception of the captain, speak as little English as possible, and have been strictly confined to the ship since we brought her here. Of course we would be the better of one or two Britishers who could sail a boat or hold a rifle straight. These two are not of the best, but

they are safe. They won't be cutting in on their own, or selling their information over our heads. That's what we must avoid at all hazards—including the employment of rather incompetent persons."

Whitmore kept close to the Sanatorium for the time that was left, and as close as possible to Marie Reinitz. At the last moment he tried to prevail on her father to delay the expedition in order to have a consultation on her case by the best men in town ; but Reinitz declined. "If there should be any recurrence of her mental weakness," he said, "which I do not for a moment expect, I am quite satisfied to leave her treatment in your hands, my dear Whitmore. If you fail to restore her health, I am sure the best man in London could do no more."

"But you would at least have no regrets if anything happened."

"I shall have no regrets whatever happens," Reinitz said, with an emphasis Whitmore did not understand. But this was the last evening ashore and there was no time to discuss further. Reinitz's decision with a man who had already made up his mind on it.

This last evening in the Sanatorium was depressing all round. Mrs. Dangan was in deep distress over the loss of Marie. Marie herself seemed to treat the expedition with consummate indifference, but Mrs. Dangan's grief was painful to her, and she had the grace to show it. The Captain fussed about and

worried himself and everybody else to distraction. He repeated all his orders for the fiftieth time, and as often apportioned off the rooms to the visitors who would arrive in shoals so soon as an important letter Dr. Whitmore had written, on a professional matter, appeared in a London paper, with the Sanatorium as the writer's address. Mackenzie was at Inniskerry getting the *Aileen* ready for her last cruise. The yacht was to pick up the Sanatorium party next morning in a little bay which ran in from the sea, toward Lough Sheelin. The Captain kept a small boat there, and it was decided to board the *Aileen* in the bay rather than embark at Inniskerry, where local gossip was already on fire with scraps of strange news from the Sanatorium.

Tiring of the house, Whitmore left it, and for the last time took the walk by the lough shore. The evening was closing down, and the soft gloaming was already creeping over the lough. The eerie feeling which this lonely mountain lake tended to produce on the night—ever since the first night, or nightmare, in which he saw it,—was strong that evening. And another feeling came with it. The girl was going with them. He would see her constantly. But he wished to see her then and there. She might come out of the mystery in which she was wrapped, or in which she persisted in wrapping herself, if she was but here to feel the spell of the place as he felt it.

That she did feel it, he was convinced. He knew it intuitively. And there was other evidence—her singing in the ruin that previous evening, when for a moment she seemed sympathetic, only to lapse immediately into the intolerable mystery which he hated. If he could only see her now, he would challenge her again. He saw her that moment and did so. He had wandered without noticing it to the old ruin, and he found her there. But she was not singing this time. She had been crying. Her eyes were still wet. His cross-examination was indefinitely postponed—owing to the exigency of the moment, which was, naturally, to comfort her.

"Marie, you are in trouble—"

"I mostly am," she interrupted, with a brave attempt at petulance, which, in its transparent pretence, went near to pathos.

"Then you will tell me this particular trouble—"

"I am not sure that I shall. This particular trouble is—you."

"If so, surely I should be consulted."

"Perhaps you ought. I think I'll chance it, even if I am defying my—er—instructions. You asked me here one evening—just such an evening as this—"

"I remember it very well."

"Why they—the others—did not trust you more when they trusted you at all. And I, not to put too fine a point on it—I put you off."

"You did—er—partially," Whitmore admitted.

They walked on some score of yards, just as they had on that other evening, in a silence that was only broken by the soft lullaby of Lough Sheelin, singing itself to sleep.

"Men who are not straightforward," Marie recommenced, "often make the mistake of thinking that a man who is straightforward is necessarily a fool. They do make that mistake far oftener than some people think—oftener I sometimes think than the more natural mistake of fancying everyone as insincere as themselves."

"I can't speak as to the general rule," Whitmore said, "but in my own case—and that of the others—I think they would have got more out of me by treating me fairly—by telling me the whole game they were playing."

"I should not quite say that."

"Why not?"

"If they had told you the whole game you would not have taken a hand at all. It is the old decoy they are depending on: let us play for pence: then pounds: then your immortal soul—but there, I should not have said all that, only—only——"

"You have not said anything wrong," Whitmore urged; "nothing that I should not have assumed if you had not spoken at all. There is nothing really in what you said

—except, perhaps, the manner in which it was said. That was excellent.”

“Oh,” said Marie, affecting a wise look, “you must know I pass for a very intellectual sort of person—at times.”

The last phrase jarred upon him. Her manner changed suddenly as she said it. Before he could reply she went on hastily, as though she had made up beforehand what she was saying, and wished to be through with it :

“I won’t say I am sorry you are coming on this curious expedition, because I am not ; I am glad. But don’t let them move you an inch from your own place in it. Keep clear of everything but that. It would be shameful if—should things go wrong—you should suffer. If they do go wrong let the rest of us sink or swim together. That was what I wanted to say. That was my trouble.”

“The rest of you—Marie—what can you have to do with them—with any wrongful purpose——”

“More than you would suppose, or than I wish. There may be mischief afoot. If so, it would not be the first time, they say, that a woman was mixed in it. Let us go back. I have said my say.”

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST DAY AFLOAT.

MRS. DANGAN came down to the creek where the Captain's boat was moored. This was the last she would see of her husband for many a day, and it was his first long absence from home since he had settled at the Sanatorium. While these two were saying good-bye, the others busied themselves with the miscellaneous packages which loaded the boat up to the gunwales. There was really plenty to do in storing them away, so that the men could handle the sails, even if the occupation had not its obvious place in the matter of good manners.

"I cannot grudge you, Charlie," Mrs. Dangan said in solemn earnest, while her tears fell fast. "I should be miserable about poor Marie if you were not going. Her father is little better than a fool, and although those two London gentlemen are real gentlemen, I would not say that either of them is remarkable for common sense."

"They are very good fellows, both of them," the Captain admitted in a generous tone, as

though he did not wish to be too eager to look for failings in his friends, which indeed he never was; nor would have been with his enemies, if he had any.

"Well, good-bye, Charlie, and keep your eye on the lot of them. You will have your hands full."

"Good-bye, Emily. Don't neglect the Sanatorium. You'll be doing a roaring trade by the time I'm home again ——" the old fellow would have added some last instruction, but he was suddenly attacked by a troublesome cough, and, turning to the boatmen, he roared out some preliminary orders. And then, when the local equivalent for "any more for the shore" was called for the last time, and Mrs. Dangan and Marie had said positively their last hundred words, he commanded with a dignity worthy of an admiral of the fleet:

"Run up the foresail—easy, now, mind what you're about, starboard your helm, sir, starboard——" this to Reinitz who was at the tiller. "Now then, man the peak halliards—hoist away. Oh, of course, of course; easy with the peak, you've jammed it—pull on the throat. Now you have it!" The Captain pattered thus as the boatmen got their small craft under sail. They paid no particular attention to him, but they took his Royal Navy manner (slightly encrusted with local rust) in the best spirit. The passengers, Marie and Whitmore, meantime pulled

vaguely (and together) at any loose end of rope they found lying about, by way of working their passage—with the usual amateur result.

A little puff of wind with which the boat started did not hold, and before they had worked out of the narrowest part of the inlet it was failing fast and drawing—what was left of it—more ahead. Running free, it would not have been of much account, and close-hauler', as they were, it hardly gave them stee age way.

"Flatt n in that jib!" the Captain thundered. As the two A.B's—Tim L. and his son Larry—did not move a finger in response, it must be assumed that the jib was as flat as it could be made. Going therefore "dead slow," it was only a mild shock when the boat stopped altogether. The boom swung in-board and remained. The boat was "in irons."

Dangan snatched the tiller from Reinitz, who surrendered it with good humour and evident relief, put it hard down, hard over, and so on; but the boat would neither pay off nor wear. Not to persist in nautical terminology, it simply stuck as it was.

Timothy Doolan solved the problem.

He was looking aloft, apparently lost in thought, when he started visibly, and said with more animation than he had yet shown:

"Danged if we're not hitched on to the ash-pole!"

"Hitched on to the devil," the Captain roared. "Then hitch off again."

"Easier said than done, mostly," Marie remarked coolly. It was not a very dreadful joke, but Whitmore would have preferred that it should have fallen to someone else—say Mackenzie—to make it. Reinitz maintained a philosophic calm. The matter was outside his department. He could not help by interfering, and had no intention of doing so.

This ash-pole was a rude deep-channel mark for the larger fishing boats. The Captain's boat was fast in it. Aloft, the ropes were badly entangled, and the Captain was furious. His history, he would have admitted, indeed boasted, as old men will, contained much that would have been better omitted. But he had never before run down the ash-pole—or run up it. It was an ill-omened start.

After many ineffectual attempts to free the boat, Mr. Doolan decided to climb the pole. He succeeded in clearing the ropes, and then pushed against the mast with both feet so as to give the boat a good send-off. He forgot for the moment that he had still to get aboard. As the boat drifted away they were hailed from the pole which, from the position of the mainsail at the moment, they could not see. In the confusion of the accident they had not missed the ancient mariner, whom they had thus unintentionally marooned, and

the Captain asked Larry sharply what the call meant.

"It's the ould man!" Larry answered stolidly, pointing with his thumb in the direction of the pole.

"Stand by to put about," the Captain ordered promptly, and Timothy was soon rescued. He dropped into the boat without remark, as though it was a matter of no consequence, and resumed his duties calmly.

After this lugubrious episode there followed an incident which had a pathetic touch in it, followed in turn with a dash of the ridiculous—the custom of the country. The boat was rounding a point which would shut off their place of embarkation from sight for good. The Captain gave the tiller to Larry and stood up in the stern of the boat. He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked earnestly back. "I thought so," he muttered. Then he squared himself, saluted, and stood stiffly to attention, although the boat was beginning to sway. A shimmer of white on the shore showed where an elderly woman was waving her handkerchief. She had waited to see the last of them. The boat rounded the point. The white flag was shut out, and the Captain quietly resumed his place at the tiller.

"Most capable woman," they heard him say softly. "Most capable—Sanatorium quite safe in her hands—most capable."

In half an hour they were safely on board

the *Aileen*, and slipping briskly through the water before a freshening breeze. The course was a bee-line for the Rock of Tormore, the first of the Croaghaun cliffs. Mackenzie had received them with a boisterous welcome, and his high spirits were soon shared by the party from the Sanatorium, which had been somewhat depressed. This result was helped out by the fine swing of the *Aileen* over the rolling waves of the open sea. The general good humour which had affected Whitmore among the rest, in spite of his pessimistic view of the expedition, was only slightly qualified by the presence of a saturnine stranger, who was introduced by Mackenzie as first officer of the *Argosy*, and an important member of the syndicate. He had signed articles on the previous day at Inniskerry, and been admitted by Reinitz to the brotherhood.

Although partly innocuous on the *Aileen*, the chief officer's cynical manner—and trick of *meaning* insolent things—would have been enough, under ordinary circumstances, to wet-blanket a beanfeast. Whitmore already disliked the Captain of the *Argosy*, entirely from motives of jealousy, as he knew nothing personally about him; but he immediately conceived an abhorrence of the chief officer, Mr. Julius Kleinpaul, on purely personal grounds. He decided that he would keep Mr. Kleinpaul at the greatest possible distance, and he never had any reason to regret that decision. Kleinpaul, indeed, had every qualification for

making himself detestable to a man like Whitmore, including the circumstance that he already knew Marie Reinitz, and greeted her as an old friend when the Sanatorium party came on board.

Nearing Tormore the wind strengthened, and soon began to blow hard from the west. The *Aileen* was ploughing along now in gallant style, lee gunwale under most of the time, while whole April showers came splashing over the weather side and flashed away to leeward in a glistening mist. It was not easy to move about on the yacht's deck, for every stiffening gust heeled her over deeper, and angry cross waves were rising where the tides met off Tormore. Black clouds spread over the sky, and the sun went out in a gloomy pall, glinting here and there sharp shafts of light, from behind this curtain, on the dark ridges of the water. A line of foaming surf, which fringed the cliffs, warned Mackenzie that he had a dangerous coast under his lee. But he knew that very well, and provided for it in the course he steered. And then, boom! went the Dead-man's bell on the Rock of Tormore. Boom! it sounded at every heavy wave—a funeral note that every son of the sea for many a mile around feared more than the evil eye. It had been a funeral knell for many of them.

The *Aileen* passed Tormore itself closer than Captain Dangan liked, and they heard the Dead-man's bell at close quarters. In the wild sea running at the headland, she took

as much water aboard as would have sunk an open-decked boat. And suddenly a thick squall swept down and sent her nearly on her beam ends. Mackenzie shot her up into the wind—he dared not slack off his mainsheet, for the land was near, and he had nothing to spare. For a minute or two the yacht was bowing and plunging with an exaggerated courtesy as the big rollers embraced her. But the weight of the squall swept away to leeward, and presently there was a sharp hail from Tregellis in the bow :

“ Boat bottom up, driftin’ on the rocks, sir.”

“ Whereabouts ? ” Mackenzie shouted.

“ Just off the head, sir.”

They could all see the boat now, and, as well as could be made out, two figures clinging to it.

All good seamen of Inniskerry gave the Rock of Tormore a wide berth when it was a lee shore, and Mackenzie paused irresolute. The ship’s company said nothing until he should speak. It was his business to decide. His decision came slowly. A man took advantage of it, the stranger, Julius Kleinpaul.

“ Is there any special danger hereabouts ? ” he asked in a level voice, cramming down the tobacco in his pipe.

“ I—er—hope not,” Mackenzie answered tentatively.

“ Which means, there is. I vote you save your own ship first.” Kleinpaul spoke coolly, almost coldly. There was not a trace of fear

THE FIRST DAY AFLOAT. III

in his voice or in his insolent dark eyes. What he said, too, was admirable sense. It was practical suicide to alter the *Aileen's* course.

"I vote you do nothing so selfish—so brutally cowardly," Marie said as evenly. She did not qualify or accentuate her advice. She just gave it, and there was an end to it, apparently, so far as she was concerned.

"I am not more afraid of death by drowning than, I suppose, anyone on board this boat. I merely say that if two must drown, it seems a poor reason why we all must drown. But if the rest of the company prefer the quixotic, that is the ridiculous, by all means let us perish nobly." He laughed naturally. His contempt seemed, and probably was, unaffected.

That was enough for Mackenzie. He altered his helm, slacked out his main sheet, and was soon flying before the wind straight for the surf-smothered rocks at the foot of Tormore.

"I didn't think he had it in him," Marie remarked indifferently, and settled herself more comfortably.

They were down on the boat in a few minutes, and found two half-drowned fisher lads clinging to it, and in their last gasp. They were also all but down on the partly submerged reefs, over which a heavy sea was smashing with tremendous uproar.

"Stand by, Tregellis, to drag them on board," Mackenzie shouted.

"Ay, ay, sir," Tregellis answered, almost inaudible in the thunder of the waves ahead. The rocks were very near. There might not be time to go about. It was too late now to think of that.

"Now then—ready about!"

They passed inshore of the boat, and then, with the tiller jammed over, the *Aileen* went round with a great swoosh, and came head to wind with every sail shivering.

"Pick them up as we pass close-hauled. We can't let the weigh off her!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The *Aileen* had come round like a top, and soon filled on the starboard tack. She forged ahead slowly and passed close to the upturned boat. At the last moment there was nearly an accident. One boy was missed by the man forward, and he was passing astern, although each in turn had a try for him. Mackenzie himself was the last to make a snatch at him with one hand, and he succeeded in catching the lad. But the sudden wrench was more than he was prepared for—he was obliged to drop the tiller to prevent himself being dragged overboard.

The *Aileen*, rather short of head sail, ran up into the wind, lost weigh, her sails again trembled. In another moment she would have been in irons, and in the next adrift for the rocks, where the little fishing boat was already being pounded into matchwood. Marie, who was next the stern, sprang to the tiller. She

THE FIRST DAY AFLOAT. 113

had often steered this boat, but never in such a sea. The yacht, obeying her helm, began to pay off—she moved ahead—the worst of the danger was over, but it was some time before she had sufficient sea room to be safe.

Mackenzie, half suffocated with salt water, a wave having poured over his head as he held on to the drowning lad, shook himself like a huge dog, and roared out in his great raucous voice :

“ Marie Reinitz is the best man aboard this ship. By God ! ”

CHAPTER XI.

WESTWARD HO!

CAPTAIN KARL MEYER was on his bridge when the *Aileen*, cleverly steered, plunged in through the narrow entrance to the lagoon. He waved his cap to Mackenzie in acknowledgment of the seamanship as the *Aileen*, well sheltered by the cliffs, came slowly alongside, and shouted some complimentary comments on it. It was not long since that he had criticised adversely Mackenzie's view of the amenities of sport, but the stockbroker bore no malice. He was thus a good sportsman, besides being a positively fatal stockbroker—for the other side. He stood up in his boat, keeping the tiller in place with his knee, and shouted up to Meyer:

"That's how I sail a boat into the cliffs of Croaghaun, in a stiff breeze, and a heavy tide racing outside."

"And well sailed too," Meyer answered, making a speaking-tube of his hand. "I'll show you presently how I steam an Atlantic liner out of the same entrance with a heavy tide racing outside."

"More power to your elbow," Mackenzie remarked in a genial yell. He ran the *Aileen* up to the gangway, which had been lowered from the *Argosy* on their coming, spilled what light wind was left out of her sails, lowered them, and transhipped his passengers and cargo. When the last person and package was aboard the big ship, the gangway was hauled up, and the final preparations were in progress as Mackenzie led his drenched and half-drowned charges to comfortable quarters. These had been prepared in advance—a comfortable cabin, more like a drawing-room than a berth, for each. Whitmore found in his state-room all his property which had been sent on in advance, and many additional, if trivial, arrangements which would appeal to a man of his tastes. Mackenzie, he knew, would have done this if he had had the sense to think of it. But the finer subtleties were not quite in Mackenzie's way. It must be Reinitz, therefore, Whitmore decided, and he was right.

"I hope you find your quarters comfortable, Whitmore," Reinitz himself said as the doctor came out of his state-room.

"Yes," said Whitmore, "I do, and I am very much obliged—to you."

"You credit me with too much," Reinitz said pleasantly. "It is Meyer. We are on his ship now. He looks after us so long as we are aboard. Your gratitude—not I trust a heavy debt—is due to him."

"I will thank him on the first opportunity," Whitmore promised. "Meantime, I thank you—for your excellent suggestions to him. I see you have suggested precisely those arrangements which I should have desired."

"I may have," Reinitz admitted absently. Then he added: "I think they are waiting for us on deck? Shall we go up?"

They met Dangan on the way. Like Whitmore, he was warm in his praises of the arrangements for his comfort, and specially mentioned one:

"Who was it," he asked, "thought of hanging that print of the battle of Trafalgar in my room?"

"Oh, that was Meyer's idea, of course," Reinitz assured him. "Meyer has the spirit of the old hearts of oak."

"Meyer should have been in the Navy," the Captain said peremptorily. "He is an excellent fellow—most excellent."

With that tribute to the commander of the *Argosy* the "Captain's" courtesy title must, to avoid confusion, pass over to Meyer, notwithstanding that to Tregellis Mr. Dangan was still the "captain" and Mr. Meyer the "master."

They hurried up on deck, and found that while everything appeared to be ready for a start Meyer was waiting, and pacing his bridge somewhat impatiently. Steam was up: the crew were in their places: the telegraphs to the engine-room were at "Stand by." Yet

Meyer waited. At last the cause of the delay appeared. She came up the companion from the saloon; quite at home already upon the ship; very nicely dressed, as was always expected of her; her costume savoured sufficiently of seafaring to be appropriate to the occasion. Marie's presence was what Meyer wanted.

"I have waited for you to come on deck," he called from the bridge. "I knew you would have to change after the drenching in the yacht, and I thought you would like to see the start."

"Certainly I should," Marie called back to him. "I would not have missed it for anything. Now you will have a chance of showing us your seamanship. How do you propose to get your vessel out of this very private and confidential anchorage?"

"By steam," Meyer replied playfully. "How otherwise?"

"Won't you hit something unless you go dead slow?" Marie asked again, really interested in what seemed a feat requiring great skill.

"We'd be sure to hit a good deal unless we went full speed," Meyer assured her, seriously.

Whitmore sauntered aimlessly about the deck. He was not certainly spying upon the two; yet he felt ill at ease. He remembered the last time he saw Meyer on that bridge, and the recollection was not very pleasant to him. On this occasion, happily, Marie was not

also on the bridge, and the episode at the parting would not be repeated.

"These undersized men are always insufferably conceited," he grumbled. His criticism was entirely unfair and untrue. Meyer was self-reliant and self-contained beyond the common, but of petty personal conceit he had not a trace.

When Whitmore had endured Meyer's conversation with Marie as long as he considered reasonable—not a very prolonged period—he went up to Marie and made a digression by saying to her :

"You know this ship well, Miss Reinitz ? "

"I ought to," she answered, very much at ease. "I have been on board often enough to know all about her——"

"And the captain ? "

"I have known the captain much longer than his present ship," she replied agreeably. Whitmore did not pursue the subject, and Meyer having gone to his telegraphs, an air of expectancy, almost anxiety, was now on every face. Mackenzie and Dangan came along, and, seeing them, Meyer shouted to them to join him on the bridge. There was plenty of room. Reinitz followed, but Whitmore still hung back and sulked. It would be a fine sight from the high bridge to watch Meyer bring the vessel out. That the doctor had not been personally invited was an oversight, due chiefly to the circumstance that Meyer did not consider an invitation necessary. He had

shouted at Mackenzie and Dangan more to let them know he was about to start than by way of extending the hospitality of his bridge, to which they were all to be free. It was a disagreeable shock to Whitmore to find that he himself could be both stupid and obstinate. It was too silly in a man who, when he had signed all his qualifications, had to write quite a long string of letters after his name—this sulking like a spoilt schoolboy. He realised that, but could not help it. It is possible that Marie realised it too, for she said very sweetly:

"I should like to see the start from the bridge. Won't you come up—with me?"

The emphasis on the last words settled it. They went on the bridge. As Marie set her foot on it Meyer blew his whistle. It was the signal to slack away everything, and the heavy shore warps fell from the steamer as promptly as if she was casting off from a dock with every appointment for the despatch of ships. The anchor was already up. Meyer pushed the handle of his telegraph down to "Full ahead," and the *Argosy* began to move through the water.

It was a nervous moment for all—except apparently Meyer. The task was really far from light. Meyer had to get his ship out of the rock-bound lagoon by an exit not much broader than her beam, with a heavy current outside. Unless, as he told Marie, the *Argosy* was driven out through this exit at full speed,

her slow-gathering weigh would not be sufficient to force her great length clear before the pressure of the heavy current would crunch her broadside on the rocks, which rose clear from the magnified porthole described. There were no nimble tugs here to hold the big ship on her course till her own momentum took their place; nothing could be done save drive her through and take chance.

The captain of the ship still seemed quite at ease, dapper and self-contained as usual. Before the look-out man on the cliff left his station and came on board, he had signalled all clear, not a sign of a sail or a steamer's funnel on the whole horizon—so let her go! At the first smashing stroke of the propellers a hundred echoes shuddered all round the encircling cliffs, and seabirds rose from their roosts in whirling myriads. The thrashing of the screws waxed louder, and the turmoil of the answering echoes became more clamorous. The seabirds screeched overhead distraught. The ship began to move a little faster—faster still—then the foam-bank began to rise against her bows, while she was still in the narrow fiord. Coming to the exit she had good weigh on and steered to a hand's-breadth—her bow pushed out through the strait gate of Croaghaun Bay—she emerged, all her long length, and threw up her head like an impatient charger as the first great roller of the Atlantic passed under her forefoot. She was at sea! There were few on board who did

not breathe easier when blue water showed between the vessel and the cliffs. Before long the *Argosy* was well out from land, doing 18 knots, on a bee-line for the Caribbean Sea.

Mackenzie was in wild spirits, and when a steward came up to the bridge with champagne bottles and glasses he gave Meyer a smack on the shoulder that nearly knocked him off his feet.

"I beg your pardon, Meyer, a thousand times. Excuse my zeal. It was thoughtful of you to order this wine up here, and you already deserve a purse of sovereigns from your passengers, together with an illuminated address, for the way you brought your boat out of that man-trap, or ship-trap, in the cliffs of Croaghaun. It was masterly." He raised his glass and his voice and cried:

"Miss Reinitz and gentlemen, I give you Captain Meyer's health. He deserves well of us all for the style with which he rammed the *Argosy* out through that hole in the cliffs."

"You are right," Dangan shouted with enthusiasm. "Most right!"

This toast was naturally well received, and Meyer replied in an amusing little speech. Thereupon Mackenzie declared he had another toast to propose, and the smart steward promptly cut the wire on a second bottle. The cork came out with a fine report, shot gaily into the air and dropped over the side. The breeze which had nearly blown the *Aileen* on Tormore had fallen away, but the

speed at which the vessel was now going created a strong head wind. It was cold, but invigorating—as exhilarating as the wine. The sea was solid blue, and the sky was mottled blue, splashed with great blotches of swift-flying clouds. The *Argosy* was smashing through a head sea with the tremendous force of modern engines. All was wonderland that was before them. Mystery is the master secret which steels the heart of the pioneer and stimulates the sluggish pulse of his arm-chair critic. No-man's-land is the magnet which never fails to draw. Farthest north or farthest south, what matters it, so that no man has been there before?

The expedition had begun!

“Now then, are you all charged?” Mackenzie cried hilariously. “No shirking this drink, Whitmore. Dangan, you're safe not to dishonour the toast by that sort of meanness. You too, Miss Marie. You must drink to this:—

“Here is *bon voyage* to the *Argosy*. May she be worthy of her great prototype! Meyer, may your name make Jason's henceforth null and void. Here's a health, everybody.” He paused a moment, then waving his cap he shouted:

“The order is—Westward Ho!”

CHAPTER XII.

FAREWELL TO THE "AILEEN."

MACKENZIE had decided that it would be unwise to leave the *Aileen* in Croaghaun Bay, lest some mountaineer as expert and daring as Whitmore might re-discover that secluded harbour, and, finding the yacht, spread undesirable reports. She could not, however, conveniently be towed across the Atlantic. The yacht had been forgotten in the stress of paramount interest, but Mackenzie remembered her when the height of the excitement of the start was over. He called all his friends aft, where they found Tregellis in charge of the tow rope. From the ex-harbour-master's portentous air something important was in store. They had not long to wait for it.

"Is the battery ready?" Mackenzie asked shortly.

"All's ready, sir."

"Then get it over."

"Ay, ay, sir!" Tregellis answered cheerily. His manner had gone back with a smack to

a Royal Naval style worthy of the Captain himself.

"Watch the *Aileen*, miss," Tregellis said gently to Marie. "It's the last you'll see of her. And she's a trim little boat."

"What are you going to do to her?" Marie asked.

"That!" said Tregellis.

As he spoke he pressed a knob at the end of a flexible wire which ran along the tow rope. A little puff of thin smoke spurted up from the yacht's deck and swept away astern. The tow rope was cast off, and immediately the tall mast described an arc of a circle, and the yacht went down in blue water.

"It is a pity, but it is necessary," Mackenzie explained. "The *Aileen*, as you saw, went down at sea. Happily, those who sailed in her were taken off in time by—er—an ocean liner bound West. The fisher-lads we saved are press-ganged by the same ship. That is all there is to say about it—for the present."

"We are getting on," Whitmore commented drily, "still piling up the mystery."

"Why shouldn't we?" Mackenzie demanded boisterously. "Why shouldn't we have as much mystery as we can pile? That's our look-out and no one's business but our own."

"I hope it will prove so," Whitmore said, and turned away. He stood looking over the rail aft till the coast began to disappear, and even Croaghaun was hull down in the soft haze which was blurring the horizon. He

FAREWELL TO THE "AILEEN." 125

was about to go below when Marie joined him. They stood watching the last of Croaghaun for some minutes without speaking. Each was instinctively conscious that the same feeling of loneliness was weighing on the other. There was a dreary note in Marie's voice when she said at length:

"Do you know, I can almost understand the home-sickness these Irish suffer so much from. It must be rather nice to have a home."

"Where is your home?" he asked gravely.

"Surely the extraordinary reticence your father observes on many purely trivial matters, and seems to have imposed on you, might now be dispensed with."

"I have no home," she answered simply.

"I have never had a home—in your sense of the word."

"I mean, what is your country?"

"I have none. I am cosmopolitan," she said with a shrug.

"You all—your father, yourself, Meyer, and Kleinpaul, speak English perfectly, but with just enough shade of foreign accent to suggest you are not English."

"My mother was English," Marie interposed. Then with a pretended pout, "I have always been told I am an average English type."

"You are not an average type—of any nationality," he said so positively that she laughed. There was pleasure in her laugh and pleasure in her eyes. But she changed

the subject deftly, as she always did when he gave their conversation too personal a trend. Nor would she return to it, although he made several attempts to re-introduce it. While they were fencing over it, the last glimpse of Erin faded into the blue.

They left the deck together, and Whitmore spent the interval before dinner in his stateroom. When the party met in the saloon for their first regular meal on board, Dr. Whitmore had made up his mind on one point. It was too late now to withdraw from the expedition, so he would worry no more over the wisdom or the folly of the step he had taken in joining it.

The dinner and its appointments were excellent, and the attendance of the waiters was not bad, considering their short training. The regulations as to a non-English speaking crew on the *Argosy* barred even pidgin English. And it would be difficult to find an experienced waiter in the world who could not manage a few words of a language so plentifully punctuated with tips. Reinitz carried most of the conversational burthen; Mackenzie had quieted down; Dangan was too busy with his food; and Whitmore was still partly dazed with the cold reality of what at times he felt half inclined to regard as a confused dream. These three said little. To relieve the awkward silence, Meyer joined Reinitz in discussing travel in many lands. They had, after some effort, succeeded in interesting the whole

FAREWELL TO THE "AILEEN." 127

table, when a message from the bridge was delivered to the Captain. It must be translated, as the bearer did not speak English.

"British battleship five miles on our port beam. Mr. Kleinpaul could not make her out sooner as it is nearly dark."

Meyer arose lazily from the table, apologised for the triviality which required his absence, and left the saloon. Reinitz had altered suddenly in his pleasant manner on the delivery of the message from the bridge, and Mackenzie, who also understood the polyglot the messenger spoke, seemed strangely disturbed.

"What precisely does a battleship signify to you more than any other ship?" Whitmore asked, when they told him what had brought Meyer from the room.

"I don't know that a battleship does at the moment signify more to us than any other ship," Mackenzie answered, with an evident effort after his usual rollicking style. "But the fact is we don't want to meet any ship at all. We are, so to speak, of a retiring disposition. We would fain be alone—alone on the wide, wide sea. It is silly of us, we know, but a harmless aberration. There is room enough on the sea for all the ships that sail it. We intend that the rest, so far as we are concerned, shall have plenty of room."

Dangan here intervened with a long and very precise account of his life and times in the Royal Navy. This lasted till Meyer re-

turned. The captain of the *Argosy* did not mention the battleship, and no one asked him about her. The restraint caused by her presence lifted presently, and the rest of the evening passed pleasantly. Altogether the voyage began well.

For the first few days Marie did not mix much with the other passengers. She kept pretty closely to the handsome suite of rooms which had been set apart for her, and the maid who was waiting for her on the ship. Whether she felt her unchaperoned position, in spite of her assurance to the contrary, which Whitmore remembered, or was seasick, she did not explain.

Of the men, Mackenzie was the most enthusiastic in praise of the voyage. He had always been in love with the sea, and now he was having his fill of it. But Whitmore was scarcely less interested, and vastly more benefited. With the first whiff of the ocean's breath, on the bridge of the *Argosy*, his old energy—lowered by poor health—began to return. Stimulated by this renewed vitality, he lost much of the bookish air which had clung to him notwithstanding his exchange of city for sportsmanlike clothes. His entanglement in the expedition, too, now that he was committed to it, developed amazingly the side of his character which was the weakest—self-assertion and confidence in his own opinion. Professionally, he was a courageous physician, but in the world of affairs he had

FAREWELL TO THE "AILEEN." 129

hitherto had no part. Now the scientific enthusiast was rapidly putting on the whole armour of the self-reliant man of action. The change was perceptible in his appearance, if not easy to describe. Marie noticed it, and approved it. She told him so in her own outspoken way.

"This voyage is agreeing with you," she said one morning, looking at him critically. The *Argosy* had steamed many degrees southward, and although the temperature had become tropical, Marie looked pleasantly cool in her white gown.

"I have not felt so well for years," Whitmore admitted. His thin face had a more healthy touch of tan in it. He looked well in his white suit.

"You look very well indeed. Perhaps this little excursion may turn out a blessing—however much disguised," she surmised.

"I have not complained of it," he protested.

"Not in words."

"In what, then?"

"I have noticed you *meaning* hard things about it. One can notice that surely without having it all set out in plain words. Haven't you observed Kleinpaul to mean insolent things—"

"To you?" he interrupted with sudden emphasis.

"Oh, not particularly to me. Indeed I think he is rather civil to me—"

"Much too civil. Why is he so different

from the other officers of the ship? They live apart from us altogether. They do not speak English. They do not have their meals in our saloon. Why should Kleinpaul be the only officer treated so? I dislike that man. Therefore I dislike to see you in his company. Perhaps I should not say that—but when I mean it it is better said," he corrected.

"I do not see the necessity for either meaning it or saying it," Marie objected coldly. "I do not intend to discuss *Mr.* Kleinpaul with you; I only used him to illustrate my argument. Ah, speak of—here he is."

In the undeclared war which existed between Kleinpaul and Whitmore the former had one impregnable advantage. He could sneer and sting and keep his temper. In this guerilla warfare Whitmore had no chance, and was well aware of it. All that was possible to him, therefore, was to decline action until an important general engagement would give him an opportunity to dispose of his enemy at a blow. For that he would have to wait.

Kleinpaul was off duty, and he and Marie walked away together. Whitmore watched them to the end of the promenade deck. When they got there, Kleinpaul pushed a couple of deck chairs under an awning, and Whitmore saw no more of them that morning. He did not pay the closest attention to Dangan, who soon joined him, and gave him a short

FAREWELL TO THE "AILEEN." 131

synopsis of the British Navy twenty years ago. But his attention was aroused when the old fellow's rambling talk came to more modern events. Then he learned that Dangan was daily drilling a squad of fifty men forward, and teaching them to handle a rifle, with Tregellis as musketry instructor. The expedition then, was to have a military branch as well as an archæological one. This might mean little, for Reinitz had explained fully the dangerous character of one belt of forest which lay in their path, or it might mean much that was being deliberately withheld. Under any cricumstances, it removed the ridiculous view he had held of the addition of Dangan and Tregellis to the ranks of the expedition.

The voyage had many unusual features, one of which was contained in the extremely curt way Meyer answered the signals of the few vessels they met. It was not worth his while to concoct any elaborate story of his vessel or her mission. If the passing ship was not satisfied with what he chose to say, she might go on her own way dissatisfied. She could not go his way very far. The *Argosy* had the heels of anything likely to be met on her course, which was carefully kept outside the track of ships.

One evening, when the dinner bell was sounding, Captain Meyer showed a sudden and extreme interest in his barometers.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN PERIL ON THE SEA.

CAPTAIN MEYER'S barometers justified his interest in them. They were acting very strangely, and seemed unable to make up their minds as to what sort of weather they were expecting. In the course Meyer was steering, and in the latitude where the *Argosy* now was, the "glass" usually observes a continuity of conduct that suggests some definite opinion, if not an absolute stability of purpose. But the *Argosy's* weather prophet was in doubt. When a meteorological forecast was finally arrived at there could, however, be no doubt of its tenor. The mercury fell with a promptness and persistence which would not have been out of place in the zones of the cyclone or typhoon. The result proved that this prophecy was correct.

For a whole day the gale blew with extreme violence, and every one whose duty did not require his presence on deck, remained in comparative comfort below. The comfort,

of course, was strictly comparative. It was far from absolute. The meals in the saloon were abandoned as fixtures, and became in every sense movable feasts. Everything was moved, including those present at the feasting. All that a good captain could do had been done to put the ship in trim for a severe strain. But the best captain and the best ship are sometimes overmatched by the elements combined against them. The *Argosy* had a very bad time.

When the gale was at its worst, the clinometer indicated a dangerous degree of heel at every roll of the vessel. It had more than once touched a mark which, when passed, very little is afterwards known, save that a few insurances are effected at ruinous rates on the overdue ship—and paid. Everything on deck that had not been made fast was smashed to pieces or washed overboard. A feeling of uneasiness began to spread, even among the heads of the expedition, although these were seasoned voyagers.

"I am going on deck," Whitmore announced in the smoking-room.

"You're much better where you are," Mackenzie advised, and Dangan concurred.

"All the same I am going. This atmosphere is suffocating." Dangan and Mackenzie had contrived to render it rather oppressive with tobacco, and other fumes.

"Lend me some oil-skin things, Mackenzie, and I'll see what it's like above."

As Whitmore would not be advised, Mackenzie dressed him in a rough-weather over-suit and sou'wester which would at least keep him dry. He was not long gone when Dangan also left the smoke-room. His place was taken by Reinitz, who was not a smoker himself, but often was willing to endure the smoke for the sake of the company. Seeing Mackenzie alone, Reinitz closed the door and bolted it. This was not surprising in itself, for the rolling of the vessel was causing it to rattle unpleasantly. The two men had then a very private and confidential conversation on the matter which was nearest their hearts, and on every point of importance save one, they found themselves in sympathy. The exception proved contentious, and they differed rather sharply on it.

"I am afraid, after all, he is hardly the man we want," Reinitz was beginning, when Mackenzie struck in brusquely :

"He's the man I want, at all events."

"Now, Mackenzie, I am not saying anything against him," Reinitz deprecated, with a friendly smile. "On the contrary, I think that he is a shade above what we require, rather than under. When he came to the Sanatorium in poor health, I thought he was the very man for us—the character for us. His other qualifications are, of course, excellent. But now that he is his own man again, I foresee trouble. He is a stronger man than I thought——"

"There are other strong men in the world," Mackenzie interrupted.

"He is a stronger man than you, Mackenzie," Reinitz said quietly.

"We are all strong on our own lines," Mackenzie interrupted sharply. "Whitmore is strong on ethics. You are strong in politics—did I say archæology? If so it was by inadvertence. I am strong in finance, as this expedition has reason to know, and as you would know more immediately if you tried to unload a weak stock on me. Simply, we are of different glories, like the stars. That's about all there is in it."

Reinitz looked mildly amused and interested in Mackenzie's definition, but he continued :

"I foresee trouble, as I said, through him, and I think I'll send him home before we go up country."

"I think you will not," Mackenzie said, also quietly. When a boisterous big man takes that tone, he is generally in earnest. Reinitz looked at Mackenzie under his brows, and said almost placidly :

"That will be as I decide."

"It will be as we decide," Mackenzie corrected quite gently. "And one of us has already decided that Whitmore shall not go home."

"Don't let us quarrel over it, Mackenzie. Think of the disastrous influence on the expedition, if we should differ too sharply."

"There is not the slightest chance of our

quarrelling, or the expedition suffering in this matter. There is not the slightest need for Whitmore to know more than we choose to tell him. I admit it would not do to tell all—or even much. But if anything went wrong, I would rather trust him than another. So you must persuade yourself to put up with him."

Reinitz did not persist, but when the gale moderated, he had a conversation with Meyer and Kleinpaul, which would have greatly disturbed Mackenzie's peace of mind had he heard it.

Muffled up as he was, Whitmore made his way cumbrously on deck, and after some search, and much scrambling, found a broken seat in the lee of a deck-house where he could watch the scene—so far as he could see it—in that comfort which was still only comparative. He was not long there, when another sou'westered figure stumbled along and made its way towards him, doing the distance in short and difficult instalments. When Whitmore saw that his place was apparently the objective of this person, he called out:

"Sorry! No room here. Seat only fits one."

"I wish to speak to you. Can't you make room—for me?"

It was Marie. He made room. She was well wrapped like himself, but drenched with spray, and, for a girl of her spirit, she was painfully agitated. Her bearing jarred on Whitmore. It was so different from the pluck

she had shown on the last cruise of the *Aileen*. There was only room for one properly on the seat. But they managed it.

Most of the electric lights had gone wrong, and outside the ship nothing could be seen except the tremendous avalanches of foam which thundered past, threatening every moment to bury the vessel. Marie's alarm was not altogether without palliation. He was trying to palliate it, when she asked abruptly :

"Do you think the ship is in real danger? My father says not, and Karl (he winced at 'Karl') says not, and Kleinpaul (he swore inwardly at 'Kleinpaul') says not. But they would tell me that, no matter what they thought."

"Do you suppose then that I should be less considerate than they?"

A green sea came over the bow, and went smashing aft in dangerous cataracts. They were safe from it in the sheltered nook he had found, but the rush of water on deck was disquieting.

"No, but I think you would tell me the truth if you said it was the truth. I think you are slightly eccentric—a man of honour, whichever you prefer."

"I would prefer that you left the eccentric part out of that testimonial," he said sharply, but melted at once when she continued :

"Very well, I accept your amendment. And now tell me what you think about the

ship. You will have heard the others talk unreservedly. You will tell me the truth."

He accepted her certificate to his honesty, and like a man of feeling, proceeded at once to disprove it.

"I think there is not the slightest danger." He had shortly before been asking himself how long anything could float in such a sea. "Meyer is as good a captain as ever trod a bridge—I am told," he added, to support his evidence.

"Yes, yes, I know that——"

The *Argosy* here plunged over a terrible sea, and for a moment it seemed as if she would founder. When the turmoil on deck had again subsided somewhat, Marie continued with a change of tone. She reverted to the puzzling flippancy which he knew so well and detested so unaffectedly.

"I feel sure you think the ship is going straight down—and you think me mad."

"N-o," he answered gallantly to both questions, and as he spoke another furious sea swept over the bow and came aft, nearly carrying the deck-house which sheltered them with it.

"You are not candid with me. You are like the others. You do think both these things."

"No," he contradicted, this time promptly. It's only the first one that costs.

"But I am mad," she gasped with a passionate cry.

He was taken off his guard by this, and said rather crudely, but without a thought of sarcasm :

" Yes, of course—I mean we are all more or less mad——"

" I don't mean in your medical sense," she interrupted, with a little sob that it hurt him to hear. " I mean that I must have been stark, staring, raving mad——"

" No, no, no ; you never raved." It was brutally inept ; but he hardly knew what he was saying.

" Thank you," she said coldly, " you do not understand me."

" I wish to heaven I did," he reflected, but he said aloud, when a lull in the roar of the wind let his voice be heard, " You are not yourself to-night. This terrible storm——"

" Bother the storm ! " she flashed crossly. " Who cares for it ? Not I, at all events ! "

He was penitent immediately. His anxiety to atone for his misunderstanding was too manifestly sincere to be doubted. Her irritation passed as quickly as it came. She continued, when she had gathered breath to make herself heard above the din on board and the roar of the wind :

" Would you consider that a girl was justified in sacrificing everything, her own wishes, her modesty, almost her reputation, for a motive which, even though she might be mistaken, she believed to be noble—worth the sacrifice ? "

"I think it would be rather noble in her to do so," he gasped intermittently, as an eddy in the wind found their shelter and assaulted them violently.

"You would not think she was necessarily—mad?"

"No, I think if she were really mad she would not act so. Self-sacrifice demands the highest sanity. Yet even in the highest forms of self-sacrifice there are necessarily the elements of insanity—of detachment from the normal."

Marie listened eagerly to this, her face close to his own to catch the words. When he had finished, she waited a moment, and then broke into a laugh of exquisite relief—as one will in the intervals of insupportable physical pain. But he could not just then diagnose that laugh with any accuracy, and so, with a pang, he added it to his list of symptoms—already overlong.

While the vessel steadied temporarily between one big wave and the next, she said as softly as the bedlam of the wind allowed:

"You would not then think badly of a girl who was—at her worst—only a little detached from the normal, to say it in your learned way?"

"Why should I? Normal persons deserve no credit for their sanity—whatever their parents may. And supernormal persons are often very interesting."

She laughed again with the same suggestion

of exquisite relief, and pleaded, "I want you to promise me something."

"If my life——"

"No, no, I don't want to take your life—only your word. I want you to promise me that you will never, no matter what may happen, think any worse of me than that I was—'a little detached from the normal.'"

He was beginning a strong protest, when she put her hand playfully over his lips. "No, nothing but that—now. I would not have said all this, only I really thought the ship was in danger—I wasn't afraid—but—I—wanted you to know. Now promise, and take me to the saloon."

He promised—with emphasis.

They made their way with great difficulty and many stumbles, and when at last they got by the same short instalments of the way to the shelter of the companion, she laughed again and said merrily, and with a colourable imitation of Whitmore's best professional manner:

"No one, but a sailor—a sailor who had also seafaring parents—could walk that deck."

Her maid was waiting for her in the saloon, and they started at once for their own rooms. As she was going she looked back; her eyes were serious; the momentary gaiety was gone again. There was no laughter in her voice as she said:

"Do not forget your promise."

CHAPTER XIV.

ARCHÆOLOGY—ETC.

BEFORE morning the gale had blown itself out, and the day that followed was fairly calm. The deck was still swept at intervals by cooling clouds of spray when the *Argosy* took the crest of a big sea over her bows, but this, in moderation, was not unpleasant. After the oppressively hot days they had experienced, a dash of the salt spray in the face was worth a wet jacket. The voyage was nearing its end, and altogether it had been a fine one. It had one serious drawback to two of those who made it.

Between Mackenzie and Whitmore a restraint began to spring during the lazy days of ocean travel. It would, perhaps, be more accurate to say that the restraint which had sprung up between them began to strengthen. This both deplored, and each strove against it; but intuitive impressions are imperative—if nearly always wrong. In this instance they were not altogether wrong. The two men had come near to a parting of ways.

Contrariwise, between Whitmore and Meyer there arose almost an exactly antithetical relation. While Whitmore found his affection for Mackenzie being overmastered by a lowering of his respect, he found his antagonism to Meyer being overmastered by an involuntary but irresistible increase of respect. It was hard to believe that Meyer could be anything but "straight." It was becoming increasingly hard to believe that Mackenzie, with his continual reservations, was anything that could be called "straight." The respect which Whitmore found he could not deny to Meyer was mutual. They were tacitly at issue on a subject which has caused a considerable amount of disputation since the world began, and could not therefore meet as absolute friends. Each was determined to displace the other in the matter most dear to him. But they were manly enemies who observed the amenities of the strictest code of civilised warfare—to use a pretty paradox. Marie took no interest whatever, so far as either could see, in their contention, giving, as the time passed, more of her society to Julius Kleinpaul than to either. Her confidential mood with Whitmore passed away, with the possible peril which had produced it.

After a day of clear sky and leaping seas, following the hurricane, Whitmore remained on deck till the darkness was some hours old, and the stars blazed over the purple heavens from horizon to horizon. He did not care to

go below, and had half made up his mind to remain on deck all night. In this indolent mental attitude he had drifted into a pleasant contemplation of the future as arranged by himself. He had arrived at a point where the incomprehensible Marie became a prominent element in the dream, when his attention was arrested by the short sentry-go which two figures were pacing on the promenade amidships. At the distance he could not recognise the man, but he could make out the swaying of a lady's skirt in the headwind created by the steamer's motion. It must be Marie and her father—probably. She would scarcely be on deck (he hoped) at that hour in any other company. He wished he could be sure. It was not his right to inquire, but the matter worried him.

He lit a fresh cigar and tried to dismiss the two figures from his mind. They returned immediately. After all, the midships promenade was as free to him as to any other. Besides, the view—of the stars—would be much better there than from where he sat. Add, that the hypersensitive dread of being unwelcome, which had been his misery as a youth, and a serious disadvantage in his struggle for existence as a man, was getting blunted. He was becoming accustomed to acting as he chose, or as he thought right, without asking his neighbour's leave, or caring for his consent or good or ill opinion, so long as he himself did no wrong. The sensation

was new and enjoyable. It sent the blood through his veins with a stronger pulse. He arose from his deck chair and went forward.

The promenaders noticed his coming and made no effort to avoid him. It was Marie, as he thought, but the man with her was Julius Kleinpaul.

They spoke to Whitmore pleasantly as he was passing them, and he stopped. Kleinpaul was in an amiable humour, and he could make himself very agreeable when he wished, just as he could, without discomfort, make himself the reverse. Marie, too, was cheerful, and in consequence the three stood by the rail and talked apparently in the frankest way, as they watched the foaming wake of the steamer stretched out in a long line of glistening white over the dark water. The influence of the scene; the vast solitude of the waste of sea; the oppressive solitude of the eternal wastes of space unrelieved, made more manifest, by the countless millions of the shining stars; this commanding influence for a time kept the peace. But presently Mr. Julius Kleinpaul developed a tendency to sneer, and Dr. Whitmore a tendency to put his foot on the sneers—and, if required, the sneerer.

"Mr. Kleinpaul is nearly as much interested as my father in your favourite subject, archæology," Marie said, by way of making rough places smooth. "I am sure you will be great friends when you once get together on your common hobby. His duties on the ship

have kept him almost altogether out of our little party, but you will be inseparable when you once get uninterruptedly together on archæology."

"I am sure we shall not," Whitmore reflected, but he said: "Mr. Kleinpaul is very comprehensive in his interests. I should not have supposed for a moment that you were talking archæology when I came up."

"As a matter of fact, I was giving Miss Reinitz a short lecture on the Nineveh stuccoes," Kleinpaul was beginning, when Whitmore interposed:

"You appeared to have a most attentive audience."

Kleinpaul laughed, not in the least disconcerted, and continued: "Her father has naturally biassed her in favour of archæology."

"Yes, I am very fond of archæologists," Marie put in demurely. Whitmore missed the swift glance she flashed to him. An electric lamp was shining at the moment in her face, so he might have seen it. It meant: "You need not make it any harder for me than it is. It is hard enough." But he did not happen to be looking her way.

"And she herself," Kleinpaul continued imperturbably, "has a very considerable knowledge of——"

"Them," Marie supplied before he could complete his sentence.

All this was far from agreeable to Whitmore. He was not so very punctilious as to object

to a remark so evidently meant in fun as Marie's. But he would have preferred to hear it in some other company than that of Kleinpaul. He was ill at ease, and it did not occur to him that another might be in a similar evil case; that her fun might have a serious side to it.

The changing of the watch created a temporary diversion, and then Kleinpaul continued, ignoring the interruption:

"One can hardly be interested in a branch of science without being, less or more, interested in those who pursue it. Miss Reinitz therefore is justified——"

"Oh, Miss Reinitz does not require your justification," Marie snapped. He started at her sudden change of tone, and his own changed perceptibly, as he said with his best sneer:

"Dr. Whitmore, I am sure, will admit that what Miss Reinitz has confessed—or claimed — materially enhances his interest in her."

"Not at all," Whitmore answered quietly. "I am already warmly interested in Miss Reinitz on quite different grounds. Her claim to archæological knowledge—made by you—could not possibly enhance that interest."

Marie again glanced swiftly at him. It was not easy to see her face in the darkness, for she was now facing away from the electric light, and so in shadow. Kleinpaul faced now in the opposite direction, but it was

equally impossible to read his expression, although from a different reason.

"Well, then, my dear Whitmore, you will admit, I am sure, that you find a new interest in me when you learn I am on your side."

"I do not claim to have learned that," Whitmore returned coldly.

"In the matter of archæological research I was about to say," Kleinpaul continued with an air of extreme good nature.

"I am only interested in the subject, not necessarily, like Miss Reinitz, in all its students," Whitmore explained stiffly.

"I did not say all," Marie demurred.

"Not necessarily then in any—merely as archæologists," the doctor amended.

A shooting star flashed across the sky, and they exclaimed in chorus on the glories of its luminous trail. When it was numbered with the meteors that have been, Kleinpaul persisted almost petulantly :

"Now, Whitmore, don't be a bad fellow! Because, in addition to our common study, I profess I am vastly interested in you, personally. Yet you are hardly polite—knowing me to be an archæologist at heart."

"Let me atone," Whitmore pleaded. "I also am a good deal interested in you, personally." Marie had moved somewhat away from them to watch the phosphorescent track of the steamer, which foamed back on the dark stretch of ocean, stippling it with snowy

points of light to counteract the flaming brilliance of the stars. Whitmore repeated in a low voice which the girl could not possibly overhear, "I really am interested in you, personally. I have been studying you since this voyage began."

"And you have, I am sure, arrived at—as you would say—a diagnosis."

"Yes—I have arrived at a diagnosis."

"Which you will confide to me—as your patient."

"How very inept you are, Kleinpaul. We physicians rarely give our diagnosis with our prescription, and never to our patients. I have diagnosed you, I will admit. I shall prescribe for you later on."

"That is good. And your prescription?"

"Doctor's stuff is mostly unpleasant. Don't meet your trouble half-way. Meantime, let's change the subject. Miss Reinitz ought to go below."

"I should say that is a question for Miss Reinitz." Kleinpaul's face was losing its expression of courteous sneering. It was becoming discourteous.

"Wrong again! That is a question for me—her physician. Miss Reinitz, you must allow me to order you below. Come with me. Mr. Kleinpaul has been too long detained from his duties—if he has any."

He held his arm for her. The ship was rolling a good deal, although there was a surface smoothness on the sea. Marie paused a

moment irresolute. Then she took his arm obediently, saying :

"Doctor's orders! Good-night, Julius."

As Whitmore turned in that night, he muttered in an unintentional soliloquy :

"So Mr. Kleinpaul is a man to be reckoned with. Very well: I'll reckon with him—when the time comes."

CHAPTER XV.

A BAD ANCHORAGE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the strained relations which had prevailed overnight, Kleinpaul seemed to bear no malice. He was even so obliging that, when Whitmore came on him and Marie in the bows, he made some excuse of duty elsewhere and left them. As he went away, Marie made a gesture of relief which, like applause in a court, was instantly suppressed. She began to talk with the haste of one who has been indiscreet, and wishes the lapse forgotten.

"We were looking at the water. Have you noticed it this morning? It has changed colour in a single night, like the hair of the Prisoner of Chillon."

"I had observed it—er—unconsciously. Your mention of it reminds me that I have been looking at it for the past hour without seeing it. It is distinctly dirty."

"Muddy," Marie corrected.

"I understand. It was stupid of me not to have thought of that. We are now in the line of some of these great South American

rivers that carry their mud solution fifty miles to sea. We are, therefore, near our journey's end."

"Near the end of the pleasantest part of it," Marie again corrected. "The rest, I fear, you will find tiresome." They walked aft along the fine promenade deck, which was still deserted by all but themselves. The hour was not very early, but the others were always very late.

"You know our route? You have been over it before?"

"I know it, but only by hearsay. I have not been over it before——"

She stopped on seeing her father spring actively, for a man of his years, up the ladder to the bridge. As every part of the ship was free to the passengers they followed Reinitz to learn the news, should they be permitted to share it, and were in time to hear him congratulate Meyer:

"Good navigation, Meyer!" Reinitz was saying. "An excellent landfall. If we may call it a landfall when we are still fifty miles at sea. However, if you have not yet made land you have made mud, and that is the next best thing under the circumstances."

"Much the same thing," Meyer agreed. He attached no particular value apparently to his own seamanship.

"Captain Meyer is so expert," Marie exclaimed to Whitmore with an innocent look, "he is not surprised when he finds he is

right. Nothing could surprise him save to find that he was wrong."

"That would surprise me," Meyer admitted. He spoke without a trace of boastfulness. "I should be an unconscionable duffer if I did not know my trade after all the time I have spent at it."

"You are sure it is the river—er—the river?" Reinitz asked.

"What else could it be?" Meyer replied.

Reinitz did not name the river. Neither did Meyer. Whitmore noticed this, but did not think the matter worth mentioning. It is true he thought it worth making a note of mentally. As he had not spoken of this he was surprised when Marie said coolly:

"No, they won't tell you the name of the river; at least, not yet. They are taking no chances, they say."

"It seems to me," Whitmore said, in the low tone in which Marie had spoken, so that the others might not hear, "that they have already taken so many chances they might chance the name of the river too."

"Well, you see they think otherwise," Marie remarked, as though the subject was not of sufficient importance to call for further remark.

Reinitz meantime had been standing silent—gazing at the horizon as intently as if he could magnify it by staring at it. He now turned abruptly and asked Meyer:

"How far off land exactly, do you make us?"

"Thirty to forty miles."

"Very good. We shall see it before long. The coast lies low here—mere mango swamp—but the *Argosy* will soon bring it on the sky line."

Meyer made some trivial reply and Reinitz left the bridge. Whitmore, with a sudden impulse, plucked Marie's sleeve—pleasant thought, that amongst all these mystery-loving persons, he and Marie should have a little joke in common—and said to Meyer:

"What river is it, did you say, Meyer?"

"I did not say what river it was," Meyer returned coolly. "If I did, I certainly did so unintentionally."

"Well, then, what river is it?" Whitmore persisted.

"It is one of the principal rivers of South America," Meyer answered with a great show of courtesy.

"I gathered as much from the mud," Whitmore observed. "I mean, what is the name of the river? Which one of the principal rivers of South America are we approaching?"

"We are approaching *the* principal river of South America—for our purpose," Meyer purred.

"But I also asked you the name of the river. You have only answered half my question—the least interesting half."

"I have only answered half your question, but—a thousand pardons—the most interesting half. Poof! the other does not matter.

It is only a geographical term signifying nothing—to us. A practical captain cannot be worried with trifles such as that. You must not speak to the man—on the bridge, Dr. Whitmore.”

That was enough.

Here Mackenzie hurried up all agog to see the shore, which he had been told was in sight. When he found it was still below the horizon, and would remain there for some time, he returned to his late breakfast, or early lunch. Dangan had kept his place at table altogether undisturbed. He pretended that he took few things in life seriously except his meals. It was not too much therefore that he should be loyal to them.

After another hour's steaming, a long, low line of purple began to deepen on the horizon. It was but faintly marked at first, as though a painter had drawn his brush carelessly across the picture to strengthen the line between the sky and the sea. It grew gradually stronger, and before the luncheon hour had arrived the *Argosy* was steaming up a splendid river, densely wooded on either bank with gigantic cotton trees and mountain palms, while monster creeping plants festooned the foliage and knitted it into a solid mass. Tree-ferns, orchids, and many minor species struggled for existence in this woodland battlefield, in which no quarter is given, and only the fittest survive.

Preparations for leaving it were now going

on in the ship, many of which were obvious in their import, but some were hidden in the secrecy which Reinitz shared only with Mackenzie. Dangan and Tregellis were desired to get their awkward squad ready for disembarkation, and they, as men who had been drilled in the old school, asked no questions and required no reasons. The squad was not now so awkward as when they took it over, and its discipline and even appearance on parade were creditable to those who had knocked it into shape. Ammunition was unpacked and distributed. Stores were catalogued and arranged. In fact, Dangan was prepared to march half-an-hour after the *Argosy* came to anchor.

The change that a return to old routine, or something like it, made in the officer in charge of this company was interesting and complete. He had lost his easy-going, good-natured, but thoroughly irresponsible habit of mind, and his appearance was improved, smartened up in the process. A pleasant-mannered, grey-haired country gentleman, fond of good living, had altered into a serious-faced veteran of the quarter-deck.

One aspect of the enterprise was now foremost in the minds of the adventurers. Although recently glad to see land, there supervened a feeling of regret that the holiday portion of the expedition was over. The rest would no doubt be full of interest, but also full of responsibility, and not unlikely of

danger. They believed that their idle spell was done—and they were right.

Captain Meyer soon showed that, whether he knew the name of the river or not, he knew how to navigate it. This was not as simple a matter as the breadth of the great flood would indicate. The deepest portion of the channel was constantly turning sharp to port or starboard, and as the hours passed and the banks of gorgeous vegetation closed in, these tortuous and outwardly inexplicable changes of course became more frequent and abrupt.

After a long day of slow steaming against a heavy current, they came at nightfall to a fair-sized island, nearly in mid-stream, and as the channel, naturally, was neither lighted nor buoyed, Meyer anchored for the night. This was a more tedious process than usual. There was more to do than merely heave the anchors over the side. The holding ground on the muddy bottom was bad, and the bow anchors were taken ashore and dropped on the island itself, the ship lying down stream with her engines going dead slow all night to take the strain off her cables.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CURIOUS TOW.

WITH the first coming of the dawn, an alarm was raised on the *Argosy* which caused nearly every soul on board to rush on deck. Bo'swains' whistles piped the men to their stations. The captain's telegraphs were sending orders fore and aft. Below, the engineers sprang to their posts. Altogether, a great if orderly stir was toward.

"What is wrong?" Reinitz hailed the bridge. He and his party, with the exception of Marie, were amongst the first on deck. In the dim light he had not observed what had happened, or was happening. He spoke calmly, but that was because he could control his emotions well.

"Look at the bank," Meyer answered. "You see we are drifting down stream."

"Is that all?" Reinitz said, in some displeasure. "It was hardly worth making such a fuss about the dragging of an anchor, when you have steam for full speed ready."

"There is more the matter than you suppose," Meyer returned. "The anchors

are dragging in one sense—they are dragging the anchorage with them. The island itself is adrift. If it had happened in the total darkness of the night this ship would now be aground—for good. We should have been closed up in that bend of the river below; closed up and grown over in three months."

"Come away. Leave him to himself. This is serious," Reinitz said, leading the other men off the bridge. "Meyer has his work for the next half-hour cut out for him. He will be glad of our absence."

"How far does he mean to tow this island?" Mackenzie asked. "Why doesn't he cast off?"

"You will see presently," Reinitz replied. "Meantime, we are out of the way here, and can see what is going on."

They had placed themselves in a good position forward, where they could watch what was being done without getting in the way of those at work in the bows. There, a knot of men were making ready with desperate haste for some operation, the purpose of which was not yet clear.

"I have read of these roving islands in the Guiana rivers—I presume this is a Guiana river?" Whitmore could not resist the opportunity for this stroke at Reinitz. "But I had no idea that they ran to this size."

"I never before saw a roving island of that size; and Meyer, who knows this river as well as I, cannot have seen one either. He would

never have anchored to this if he had not thought it a fixture."

A diversion was occasioned here by the arrival of Marie, whose appearance showed no symptom of haste at her toilet. When they had told her the nature of the situation, Reinitz continued in answer to a question from Mackenzie :

"A tree becomes entangled or stranded on a shallow; another joins it, another, and the nucleus of the island is formed. Mud is washed up on the raft, which swells in size with speed, and immediately the riotous vegetation of the tropics founds a colony. Then a battle begins between the island and the river. If the island has time while the river is low to get itself properly staked down with mocca-moccas, or anchored by ropes of the clinging parasitic growths, the river gives in, alters its bed, and passes by some other way. If, on the other hand, the first great flood comes before the obstruction is fixed the island is swept before it, and sometimes far out to sea. Look !"

Reinitz stopped with a startled exclamation. The *Argosy* had drifted into a slower current, and the island, in consequence, was bearing down upon her. The cables slackened and sagged. The great black bank loomed nearer. It would sweep down upon them—overwhelm them—bury them !

And still Meyer did nothing.

The sensation of drifting down stream

with a whole island in tow was eerie in the extreme. The partial darkness which had not yet lifted; the silent cruise of the vast raft on which a miniature forest was *growing*; the powerful perfumes which the flowers there distil day and night; the utter strangeness of the situation; all contributed to the oppressive sense of helplessness which was becoming painful. The steamer and her tow were now obviously drifting into the bend of the river, as Meyer had foreseen. Soon, therefore, the ship must be aground, either fore or aft, or in both; and once grounded there, always grounded. The island would close her in against the bank, take root itself afresh, and in three months the *Argosy* would be buried in the ferocious foliage as effectually as the parasite is encysted in the pearl.

And still Meyer did nothing.

Reinitz looked from the bridge to the bend toward which they were drifting, and then back to the bridge. He was outwardly undisturbed, or but slightly disturbed. He still controlled his agitation well, for none of those near him knew so completely as himself how immediate was the danger. Mackenzie had kept very quiet also, and, save that he smoked vigorously at a cigar he had not lit, he gave no sign—for a time. But his temperament did not stand the inaction well. If he could only be doing something himself! There was, of course, nothing for him to do, and so, at length, he let an impatient criticism of Meyer

escape him. The rough emphasis of it seemed selfish to Whitmore. Why should Mackenzie bemoan himself specially in a danger all shared. It seemed cowardly; but Mackenzie, he knew, was no coward. He said sharply:

"There are others here who have as much at stake as you——"

"What have you at stake?" Mackenzie interrupted rudely. It was not a time to pick phrases.

"The ambition of my life is at stake." The two were standing off from the others, and their conversation was private to themselves.

"Pah! The cash of my life is at stake. Look here, Whitmore, I should not have spoken so rudely, but listen to this carefully, as I don't want to have to say it over again. I told you it was I who found the money for this expedition. But I didn't tell you how I found some of that money. You would not—er—understand, not being a business man. And—it just amounts to this—I found some of the money in such a way that I can't afford to lose it again. If I do I shall lose—er—more than the money."

"I am sorry to hear that, Mackenzie," Whitmore said gravely. They rejoined the others, but Mackenzie continued:

"And now all depends on that little rat of a man on the bridge, who seems to be taking it precious easy. Whatever is he waiting on? Why doesn't he do something?"

"He is waiting for the proper time," Reinitz

interposed in a harsh voice that silenced Mackenzie.

"Most capable man, Meyer," Dangan put in—"most capable." It was his only contribution, so far, to the conversation.

"Oh, Dangan's got so precious highly disciplined latterly," Mackenzie retorted, with an impatient shrug of his broad shoulders, "he supports the 'proper authorities' right or wrong. 'His not to be as a way,' and all that rot."

"I don't say that," Dangan objected, without the least temper. Mackenzie's manner might easily have been nettled. "But I do say Meyer is a capable man—most capable."

Meyer indeed did seem to be taking matters very coolly. But that was only his manner. He was not missing a single point in this game with the river and the island. The forces against him, if blind, were enormous, and he had not a point to spare. He peered up stream, down stream, and then, seemingly satisfied that the vessel was just reaching the portion of the river most suitable to the manœuvre he had decided on, he stood with his hand on the telegraph for a moment, which seemed, to those who were watching him, a month. Then suddenly—a tinkle on the telegraph—and the starboard cable was slipped!

The roar of the chain running out through the hawse hole startled a tumultuous colony of birds on the island. Macaws, parrots, and

screaming fowl of every species, it seemed, that could yell were doing so with their might. On the mainland they could hear the reverberating note of the red howling monkey, the curious yapping bark of toucans, and the "ting" of the campanero. And close by an owl or goatsucker flitted past with a weird cry. The ship swung on her port cable until her stern pointed away from the bend and slantwise toward the new direction of the river. Then the second cable was slipped to another raging chorus of birds, and the *Argosy* went full astern, clearing the bend of the river with little to spare. Had Meyer slipped his cables before he swung his ship to clear the bend, for which in the distance he could not have got up sufficient steerage-way, or had he held on to them longer, the story of the *Argosy* would now have been told.

"Is all right now?" Marie asked, putting her hand on Whitmore's arm. He had left the others, once the crisis was past, to watch a jabiru, or great stork, some distance away, which had gone placidly on with his fishing, notwithstanding the tumult. The daylight was coming fast.

"Do you think we have passed the worst?"

"I think that those who brought you on such an enterprise are very grievously to blame," he answered gravely.

"I think I mentioned to you before that my presence was necessary—otherwise I should not be here," she said coldly. "Besides, what

is the good of criticising my action when it is too late to alter it ? "

" That is true. We must make the best of it now. It was only anxiety for you which caused me to stumble into that stupidity. Forgive me."

She looked him suddenly in the eyes, and then, as though her unspoken forgiveness had indiscreetly said too much, she looked as suddenly away, with a warmer colour in her face. He accepted, with a very good grace, his forgiveness tendered thus.

Meyer had now a clear passage up stream, with the exception of a small spur of the island which projected into it. Time was precious—for no one could tell how soon the island which was stranded in the bend might blunder broadside across the river, and close the navigable passage permanently—so Meyer drove his ship full speed at the obstacle. The *Argosy* shore her way through, with a few bent bow-plates, and a small grove of orchids and tree-ferns which came aboard in the process.

" It was a close thing that," Meyer said, as he stepped down from the bridge, leaving his first officer in charge.

" But a miss is as good as a mile," he added pleasantly, and went down to breakfast.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MYSTERIOUS CAPTAIN.

How many miles, or how many hundred miles, up this river the *Argosy* steamed few on board except the Captain knew. He may have confided his reckoning to Reinitz, or Reinitz may have known the distance from having travelled it before, but no further confidants were made. Even the first officer, Mr. Julius Kleinpaul, was kept as far as possible from any precise information on the subject. He was not over anxious for it, fortunately, and gave no sign that he resented their reticence. All calculations and observations were made exclusively by Meyer, and Kleinpaul only seemed pleased to be relieved of the trouble. The other officers did not count.

But the river voyage, although considerable, was not long enough for the company on the *Argosy*. They could not well grow weary of the marvellous beauty of the forest on the banks, and the voluptuous vegetation which interlaced itself in the splendid profusion of foliage and flower over the creeks made an

ever-changing panorama of delight. So dense was this orchid-decked overgrowth that sometimes they could hardly tell when they were passing one of the tributary streams which fed the main river with that coffee-coloured water which discoloured the sea so many miles from shore. The banks of the river seemed to rise steeply from the water; but that was owing to the graded tree growths, from the pallisades of mocca-mocca down in the very mud, on, step by step, to the mighty mora, a hundred and fifty feet in height, from every branch of which clung great festoons of parasitic growths, ablaze with gorgeous flowers. The end of this exquisite excursion came too soon, and with its ending, the essentially picnic portion of the expedition was really over, and sterner work was about to begin.

In the evening of the second day on the river, the *Argosy* slowed down and stopped; and immediately there appeared on the port bank a considerable assembly of natives, drawn up in the most admirable disorder, beside a rude wharf or landing stage. That even this clumsy dock had been manufactured in the wilderness was sufficiently surprising, but when the whole assembly of Indians, bush negroes, and enormous mule trains came into view there was good ground for complimenting Reinitz on the completeness of his arrangements. The suspicion of opera-bouffe adjuncts, which had persisted in

Whitmore's mind long after the expedition had been commenced in earnest, was now finally removed. This thing was *meant*.

"He seems to have arranged everything excellently," Whitmore said to Mackenzie, whom he found on the gangway watching the transshipment of stores.

"That is a detail," Mackenzie answered drily. "I have paid for everything—excellently."

"Everything! Am I to consider myself a volunteer?" Whitmore spoke sharply, and meant to do so. He tried to sting Mackenzie into an explanation which was surely owing to him, and had been too long delayed. He only succeeded in drawing from Mackenzie an offer which helped to widen the breach between them—already agape.

"You are on our strength, and will, of course, be paid at once, if you are in a hurry for your money. I thought that formality in the bond we signed about 'share and share alike' was all you required. Come to my cabin, and I will pay you now in gold for your time at ten guineas a day since we left Ireland."

"No, no, Mackenzie! My remark may have been injudicious, but it was not stupid enough to deserve—that. Can't you see that I only want your full confidence; I give you mine, and I have a right—I put it to you, I have a right—to yours."

"You have," Mackenzie admitted penitently, and said no more about his gold.

"But the time for that is not yet. For God's sake, Whitmore, hold on to that confidence for a while longer, and you won't regret it."

"Well, I'll trust you yet awhile, Mackenzie, but you are playing the wrong game—with me." With that he turned away.

"Blast you!" Mackenzie said passionately to himself, "I am playing you as well as the game." The flush passed from his face, and he added less emphatically, "It's a big game—and a good game—and Dr. Maurice Whitmore is the hardest card in it to play—and without him the game would not be worth the candle—and except me, no man alive could play the trump card—and I don't talk high falutin, with an extra pack up my sleeve, like Mr. Max Reinitz—or the higher ethics, considered strictly from my own temperamental point of view, like Dr. Maurice Whitmore—or try to spoon poor Marie, like Whitmore, Meyer, and Kleinpaul—what a deuced superior sort of girl that maid of Marie's is—I don't do a single d—d thing but play the game fair and square, and I'll play it out—and win it. Meyer, I think, is straight. But about that Kleinpaul fellow—hum? I am not so sure! I wish to God I dare take Whitmore into the whole thing. He would be worth a score only for his cursed ethics—well, we'll see. Here's Dangan; I'll split a bottle of Burgundy with him before I leave the ship."

Dangan concurred,

In addition to the passengers she landed, the *Argosy* also set on shore a great mass of digging, blasting, and even mining impedimenta. Everything was constructed so that it could be taken to pieces and transported by instalments. There seemed to be men and mules enough lined up on shore to carry a ship's cargo inland. They could have done so on any reasonable road, but the road before them was in every way unique. Many parts of it were such that on them a mule could carry little but his rider, and that only at the risk of both their lives.

The sun was low on the horizon when the last package was ashore, and it only remained for the principals of the expedition to follow Dangan and his riflemen down the gangway. Mackenzie was already in one of the boats, and Reinitz on the gangway, but Marie was not to be seen. Whitmore did not like to leave the ship without her. He found her leaning on the rail, watching the boats which were flying to and from the bank.

"We are going ashore, Miss Reinitz."

"So it seems," Marie agreed.

"Your father is waiting for you."

"Oh, no. He has gone by himself. I told him I would go in the last boat—with Mr. Kleinpaul."

Whitmore paused for a moment, too amazed to speak. Surely Kleinpaul would remain on the ship with the other officers, not a man of

whom, or of the crew, except Dangan's riflemen, was leaving the *Argosy*.

"Will you wait for me—not Kleinpaul—here a few minutes?" he asked so seriously, that she answered at once:

"I shall wait for you if you wish."

"I do wish it," he said briefly, and went quickly to the bridge where Meyer was standing, looking nonchalantly down at the boats below. To him said Whitmore:

"Can you spare me a minute, Meyer?"

"An hour, my dear Whitmore," Meyer answered, with a courtesy which would have savoured of caricature only for its manner. That was perfect.

"A minute will do. Kleinpaul is going ashore."

"So I am told."

"With your consent?"

"It was not asked."

"Have you given it?"

"It is not required."

"You are the captain of this ship."

"I have that honour."

"Then you have control over your own officers."

"They are aware of that."

"How then—pardon me, but I am not troubling you idly—does Kleinpaul not require your permission? Does he deny your authority—or defy it?"

"Neither. The matter is much simpler. Kleinpaul is no officer of mine. I have told

you more, Whitmore, than I consider you have any right to ask. And now I shall wish you a pleasant journey and safe return."

"Another moment. Kleinpaul has certainly masqueraded as your first officer."

"On that, pardon me, my dear Whitmore, you have not the right, so far as I am concerned, to comment. You must perceive that the subject is disagreeable to me. It is rather unkind of you to persist in it. Your own naturally keen sense of what is due to me is already—so I take it—conscious of transgression, and in that I concur. I consider, if you will allow me, the subject disposed of."

"Very well, Meyer. If you prefer to talk in that preposterous way I can't complain. Neither can you complain if I talk in my own way. The subject is really very—difficult. Be a good fellow and don't take offence. I will only ask one question more. Is it your wish that Kleinpaul should be afforded—gratuitously, as it seems to me—a further and unlimited opportunity of—of—oh, curse it—hanging round this girl?"

For a moment the eyes of the dapper little Captain shone, and a dark flush showed under the leathern skin of his weather-tanned face. His temper passed, or he controlled it, and said coldly :

"My dear Whitmore, you nearly led me into a dreadful solecism. I declare I was within a hair of ordering you off my ship. Had you been accessory to so deplorable a piece of

gaucherie on my part, I should never have forgiven you—never. Let me make amends for my uncommitted sin. To do so I tell you that it is neither my wish nor by my arrangement that Kleinpaul—excellent fellow—accompanies your expedition. And now, good-bye again, and take care of yourself when passing through the belt of pure jungle which I understand you have to cross."

Whitmore turned away with a hasty word of farewell. There was nothing to be gained by continuing the interview. He found Marie where she promised to wait for him, and they left the ship together. As they were being rowed ashore in a broad, shallow boat, Marie trailed her hand in the tepid water. She did not seem to notice when the sleeve of her thin blouse was drenched by the wash from an awkward oar-stroke. It was not a serious accident, for the dress would soon dry in that atmosphere, but the total inattention struck Whitmore as strange and undesirable. He was about to draw her attention, when the girl looked back toward the *Argosy*, and waved the hand she had been trailing in the water, careless of the little shower she sprinkled on herself.

Whitmore looked back too, and saw Meyer standing at the extreme end of the bridge—erect as always, dapper and debonair—he never lounged. The sun was strong in his alert, weather-beaten face. They could almost see its deep lines in the bright light. He

stood for a moment motionless. Then he raised his cap and waved it in a cheery salute. They were to see him another time in that place, and at a time of parting too. They remembered the occasions well, and always bracketed them in their memories. To relieve a feeling of oppression which it seemed had fallen on them both, Whitmore said quietly :

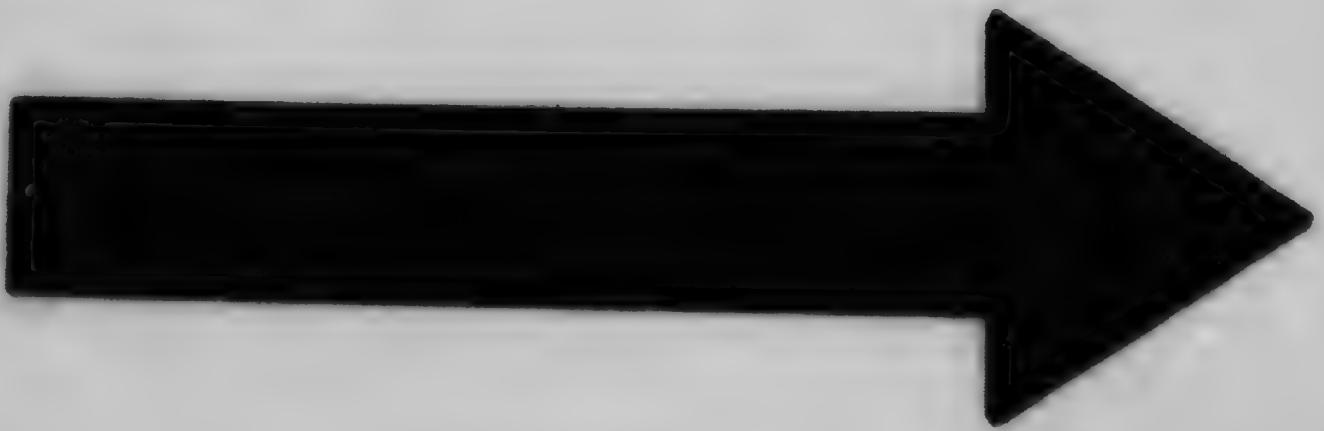
" Meyer is a nice fellow, but a rather incomprehensible man, is he not ? "

" He is the best man in the world," she answered with wet eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

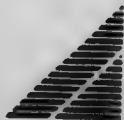
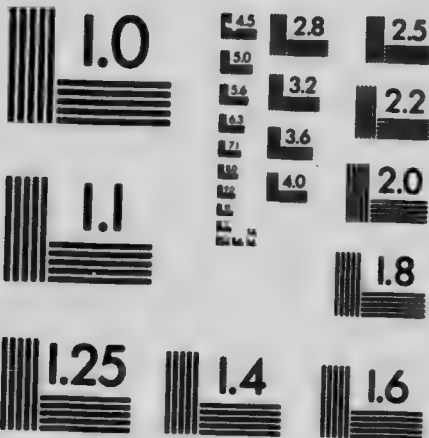
IN THE FOREST.

THE overland march—the salient features of which Reinitz had briefly outlined for the benefit of the marchers—was not long commenced, when Whitmore began to notice Marie's maid more particularly than he had hitherto thought worth while. He had seen from the first, and without difficulty, that the girl was a striking type, physically, of the dark, foreign, tragedy-queen order. He had also observed, without for one moment prying into what did not concern him, that the two girls were more on the footing of intimate personal friends than mistress and maid. And he could not help being conscious also that while on board the *Argosy* he himself had found favour in the maid's eyes. This was entirely disagreeable to him for two reasons: overt advances from women were repellent to him, and he feared that Marie was aware of her maid's predilection. It is true Marie herself had been far from backward more than once — but that was different.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482-0300 - Phone
(716) 286-5989 - Fax

The Signora, as Whitmore had christened the girl, rode like a woman who was no novice, and she flirted, when the opportunity offered, like an expert. This Mackenzie, who had been unobservant in the voyage, apparently discovered, very early in the march too. He was making such good use of his discovery that Whitmore took occasion to mention the matter. Its discussion did not take more than a minute.

"That maid Miss Reinitz has brought," Whitmore said, "is a good looking girl——"

"Agreed!" Mackenzie interrupted.

"But she is much too forward."

"Not for me," said Mackenzie.

"And I think she forgets her position in attaching herself so very openly to you."

"That is a matter entirely for herself—and me. Pray do not trouble yourself so intimately about my private affairs, Dr. Whitmore."

They travelled for some days at a slow pace across vast savannahs, camping, comfortably enough, at night in tents carried by the transport mules. A rough road had been improvised over the rolling prairie, by which it was possible to make moderate progress, but on either side of the track, giant grasses, ten feet high, profuse with glorious blossoms, offered a barrier almost as impenetrable as a jungle. The bushmen, however, knew how to find the track again where patches of it had partly disappeared, and they had even a tradition of its origin. Quite recently they

had made many journeys on it, for nothing but ceaseless care would have preserved it from the inrush of the fecund grass.

It was a long road and a hard road, but the way was lightened by occasional episodes of sporting or other interest. They collected as they marched specimens of fur and feather to adorn their homes on returning from this wonderland of tropic travel. Humming birds of glorious plumage, macaws, parrots, toucans they had for the knocking over when passing through outlying belts of the forest they were soon to enter in earnest. And in their various habitats, tapirs, caviés, a couple of ant bears, and a jaguar fell to their rifles or shot guns.

Dangan and Tregellis managed their escort with great tact. Indeed, it hardly deserved the nick-name which Mackenzie, in one of his exuberant moods, invented for it. The title gave great displeasure to Dangan, who took himself and his guard of honour very seriously. They were forming up one morning to lead the advance, when Mackenzie shouted to the commanding officer :

"About that story you told us at mess last night, Dangan! Why not tell it to"—he waved his arm in the direction of the riflemen, who by this time had learned to sit their mules safely—"Why not tell it to them?"

"Why should I?" Dangan asked stiffly.

"It would suit them. It is really only suited to—the Horse Marines!"

Dangan tried to suppress the name, but found it impossible, and till his company was finally disbanded, that remained its designation. It served as well as another.

On the border of a dense belt of forest through which they had to pass, a less pleasing incident occurred, which served to impress the serious side of the journey on the most careless. Before plunging in to this forest of dreadful twilight, where, owing to the impenetrable mass of foliage overhead, the sun never shone, the party proceeded to camp for the night. The advanced guard heard the recall, and were about to wheel their mules, when a man in the front rank started slightly in his seat, sat for a moment very rigid, and then without a word fell headlong from his saddle.

Dangan spurred and thrashed his jaded mule at a gallop to the spot, and Whitmore and Reinitz followed as fast as they could get their animals to go. They turned the fallen man over on his back, and a glance showed Whitmore that he was dead. A poisoned arrow from a blowpipe at close quarters had penetrated his breast over the heart.

"I understand," Reinitz said, when Whitmore remarked on the insignificance of the missile. "It is an old trick they have got of mixing that villainous curare with something that makes it absolutely and almost instantaneously fatal. Dangan, get your men to fire a few volleys—right there!"

Reinitz pointed in the direction of a particularly dense growth of parasite plants ahead. In a minute Dangan had a dozen men lined up, and at his command a volley was sent into the bush.

"Give them two or three more," Reinitz directed.

These were duly loosed off, and when the last shots had ceased, Reinitz said :

"It is a pity for the poor fellow, and we have no men to lose—so soon. But that will be our only trouble with the enemy for the present. This breed of Indian does not fight to any extent. When he is opposed he walks off. We have hurried his walk on this occasion, I am sure."

Next morning the dead man was buried, and the expedition moved on depressed by the unhappy occurrence. It left an uneasy feeling on most. A sense of ill luck seemed to oppress them, and this did not pass until the exigencies of the route became severe enough to displace it, and they entered the deep belt which Reinitz had mentioned as lying like a lion in their path. Here the journey was very slow and difficult. They might have wandered there till they were all old but for the extraordinary preparations which had been made for their coming, and must have been made recently. Like the Savannah grass, the Guiana forest is no respecter of rights of way. The ruthless vegetation springs with almost sentient zest toward any clearing

made by man ; seizes the opportunity to express itself with furious haste ; the interference is redressed, and all is once more forest, dense, dark, and dank ; spewing growth from the teeming earth ; fighting itself to the death for light and life.

Through this orgie of growth the expedition pushed slowly on south-east from the point where they left the mysterious river, whose name was withheld from all but the inmost circle of the elect. After many days of struggle the travellers emerged on higher ground, and then before their tired eyes, on the distant horizon, there loomed a towering range of mountains, a vast chain stretching from east to west, piled with tumultuous peaks, a rampart built up to the heavens. This must surely mark the limit of their journey. The splendid blue of the mountain line against the sky suggested bracing air, instead of smothering miasma. The lungs filled in anticipation of the glorious draughts in store. It was exhilarating even to think of the cool cascades splashing down steep cliffs, of wind-swept cañons, of the sky overhead instead of the matted forest. A murmur passed in unrehearsed chorus, and then—

"The mountains !" Mackenzie shouted with all his might.

"Our mountains !" Reinitz shouted back, his calm manner giving way perceptibly.

Dangan urged his worn-out mule to the front rank, and muttered fervent thanks :

"I'm not sorry that journey is nearly over."

"Our journey is over those mountains," Reinitz said coolly.

"What! Over?"

"Well, through. We go through a pass, the only one for several hundred miles. Then on the further side lies the Happy Valley. And there our journey is done."

"I am glad to hear it," Dangan cried heartily.

Every step was now upward as well as onward. The sickening heat, which had been killing man and horse, began to grow supportable. The air was less suffocating. Energy trickled back into the nerveless pioneers, and the transport animals showed renewed spirit. But it was the evening of another day before they reached the entrance to the pass, and there they encamped for the night.

After the long and laborious day, the hour or two in the mess-tent was an agreeable relaxation. Kleinpaul's company could have been spared without regret, but he did not pointedly attempt to make himself disagreeable, as he had more than once done on the *Argosy*. On this occasion he was in a specially benevolent humour, and in a burst of confidence he complimented the whole party on the excellent fellowship he had found amongst them.

"Yes," said he, lighting another cigar, and

stretching himself lazily out. "A better set of fellows I should not seek to travel with."

This could not gracefully be disputed, and no one replied. The conversation that evening, owing, no doubt, to the physical fatigue of all, had been dull. Kleinpaul's effort failed to smarten it. From the forest hard by a continual hum of myriads of insects came with a drowsy and not unpleasant effect on the ears. This was accentuated by the booming of the tree-frogs, and the buzzing of the cicada. At longer intervals a howling monkey made himself heard, and very subtle was the influence of the perfumes which the nocturnal flowers begin to distil when the sun goes down. But the ants were terrible—multitudinous and indefatigable. No one really wanted to talk. The five men sat silently for a time, all of them but Reinitz smoking persistently.

It was a jar upon more than one when Kleinpaul, whose temperament was not over susceptible to the weird influence of this strange environment, said with a yawn :

"We do not seem to be a hilarious party this evening."

Again no one answered. Their inattention seemed to nettle him. He remarked, with more of his old sneering manner :

"Really we are so dull here, I think I'll have a little stroll in the hope that Miss Reinitz

(he looked at Whitmore) or her maid (he looked at Mackenzie) may be taking the air, and permit me to join them."

"Stay where you are!" Mackenzie said harshly. If he had fired a pistol he could not have startled the company more successfully. The words had gone with a bang that seemed especially to disturb Reinitz, and even took the cool Mr. Kleinpaul aback for a moment. He soon recovered himself, and tried to laugh off the assault.

"Has the bear a sore head——" he was beginning in a jocular tone, when Mackenzie again retorted in no amiable tone:

"Put it so if you please. But just keep this in mind. These—" he had nearly said ladies. The situation was difficult. "These—er—girls are on this expedition for what reason under the sun is more than I really know—or care. Being here—withstanding that one of them has her father present—I take the liberty of saying that no nonsense from you will be allowed. That's all I have to say."

Kleinpaul's face was a study in emotions as Mackenzie spoke. He was a shade paler, but very self-possessed as he asked:

"Have you the slightest idea of my position in this expedition?"

"I have a precise idea of my own," Mackenzie replied. "My position is this:—I agreed to your coming to please Reinitz.

If I tire of your company—or think it better omitted—I will—omit it."

"By what right——"

"The right of the strongest," Mackenzie said with a snap which closed the discussion. It was an unpleasant interlude.

CHAPTER XIX.

EL DORADO.

AN early start was made next morning, for not even Reinitz knew what difficulties might be encountered in the pass, and it would not be convenient to camp for the night with all their animals and impedimenta on the brink of a precipice. Reinitz, it is true, had passed by that way more than once before, but landslips often occurred there which blocked the way and depreciated the value of previous knowledge. It was well they acted on this forethought, for the journey proved to be full of dangers.

Toiling upward through the pass, they found in many places evidence of a good road winding round the cliffs, but mostly the natural attrition of the mountain sides, or landslips, had swept away all trace of it. Once or twice fortuitous circumstances laid bare the original road bed, a broad avenue sweeping round the curves, and jutting over the cañons, hewn deep where necessary into the solid rock, and set elsewhere with pavement as everlasting as the Appian way.

"This," said Reinitz impressively, as they halted to look at a stupendous panorama spread far below the height to which they had now climbed. "is the great caravan route of the first civilisation which the world has known. From evidence I have discovered on the spot where our journey will end, this great thoroughfare on which you are halted was busy with the commerce of a continent when the foundations of Babylon were still in the far distant future. This is the only pass through this range of mountains. My discovery of it was purely accidental, a landslip laid bare a way that must have been impassably blocked for centuries. Hence I found—what I found."

"More power to you," Mackenzie cried; "we'll find it all over again with you for our guide."

"I think I must now burn my last boat, Reinitz," Whitmore said heartily. "I must withdraw my last reservation. Your, and my friend Mackenzie's, melodramatic mysteries were enough to justify some scepticism on my part. But this road is too much for me: I surrender at discretion."

"I accept your surrender with great pleasure," Reinitz exclaimed not less warmly. "I should have been more troubled over its delay if I did not know that a little while now and it must necessarily have followed. When you see my discovery you could no longer doubt, even if you were a lineal descendant of the unbeliever."

"I no longer doubt!" Whitmore said frankly. As he spoke he caught a curious look in Marie's eyes, which were turned away the moment he noticed that she was watching him. That look somehow disquieted him, and he discontinued his professions.

As they wound higher and higher up, the track became more dangerous; here, because it was so narrow that only the sure-footed mules were safe on it; there, because the ground crumbled under the passing animals, and once or twice a terrible accident seemed imminent. A pair of the pack mules were therefore driven abreast in front of the cavalcade, like a pilot engine on a railway. When these passed safely the road was considered clear—safe!

This pair of mules jogged on with great unconcern, although they crossed many spots that would have stopped a nervous beast, or man. The pathway at last narrowed to a point where it seemed even this pair of pioneers must pause. But they trudged on without paying any attention to the awful precipice below the ledge where the two had hardly room to go abreast. They had nearly rounded an out-jutting point of rock on the mountain side when the one next the precipice stopped, and made a furtive but futile attempt to get on the inside of his companion. His feet sank down into the pathway, which gave under him, and, like a fly on insect paper, every effort to detach his limbs only forced

them deeper in. The whole cavalcade watched the struggle, open-mouthed, paralysed for the moment, unable to help the poor brute in any way. There was nothing, indeed, that they could have done if their presence of mind had been entirely undisturbed. In a moment the whole road for a stretch of twenty feet gave way and fell in a loose rubble that went roaring into the abyss. Both mules crashed, somersaulting after it, cannoned off outstanding rocks, rebounded clear of others, and plunged at last out of sight into the depths far down below.

For a minute every man stared down. Not a vestige of path was left on the sheer side of the mountain in front—only the dizzying depth from which the dust of the débris was still curling up in a little puff of brown smoke.

A new trait in Kleinpaul's character was shown by this misadventure. He happened to be riding ahead of the main body, and close behind the pilot-engine mules, when the road broke short at the forefeet of the animal he rode. His mule gripped on its feet more firmly, and trembled in very natural fear, but did not stir a step. A wrong step might send it after its fellows, and it seemed to know that. Kleinpaul leant forward in his saddle, shaded his eyes from the blinding sun with his hand, and stared down after the falling mules, watching with gusto their terrible descent. It was an instance of extraordinary coolness and courage—and heartlessness.

Many were admiring his nerve, when Dr. Whitmore created a diversion. He was heard to say, with determination :

"That is enough!" He forthwith backed his mule to where Marie and her maid sat in their saddles almost as unconcerned, it seemed, as Kleinpaul. "You go no further, Miss Reinitz," Whitmore said to her resolutely. "Scientific research requires human sacrifices, but the victims must be volunteers. I will not permit your life to be thrown away when it can serve no purpose."

"I think you are wrong in that," Marie answered very quietly. "My life, as I have more than once told you, is as necessary to this particular form of—scientific research—as that of any person here."

He would have persisted, but Mackenzie, who had been reassuring the handsome maid, pleaded :

"Don't turn rotten now, Whitmore. What signifies a couple of mules gone wrong?"

"The path is gone wrong, too."

"Bother the path! It can be mended."

He raised himself in his stirrups and shouted in a stentorian voice: "Bridge-builders to the front! And stir yourselves!"

In answer to the order a number of the native bearers rode up, jumped off their mules, unpacked, and began to screw together small beams and thus make large ones of them. The men did not work with the celerity and precision of a squad of Royal Engineers, but it

was wonderful how soon their purpose began to take shape. A good part of the day, however, was gone before the gap was mended and the march recommenced.

While the first animals of the long train were passing safely across the improvised bridge and the main body were preparing to follow, Mackenzie had further speech with his friend. Whitmore was tightening the girths on his mule, but he desisted when Mackenzie said roughly :

"A word with you, Dr. Whitmore. You are a good fellow and a good man—maybe I am not so good a man—and, as I have mentioned before, you are, in your own way, necessary to the complete success of this expedition or you would not have been asked, would not have been given the opportunity, to join it. Now, the next time a little mishap occurs, I'll trouble you to keep your mouth shut about it. If you don't like the risk, you are at liberty to funk it yourself. But don't feel at liberty to funk my expedition—my expedition, I say! If the man who paid for it can't call it his, who should, I'd like to know? Therefore, the next time you feel alarmed, go back, and take that lunatic girl of yours with you—but keep quiet about it. That's straight and it's sense — if it isn't pleasant."

Whitmore stopped his harnessing, and turning to Mackenzie said with painful calm :

"It's straight, Mackenzie, and in a sense I

may have deserved it. So I'll own up and ask you to forgive me."

"Good," said Mackenzie shortly.

"And as one wise caution deserves another, I'll give you a piece of advice as good as your own. Don't speak to me—or of that girl—again in that way, or in such a place as this." He strode up to Mackenzie, and said with blazing eyes and features quivering with passion: "If you do you will certainly go—down—there—where the mules went—if I must go with you. That is as straight as you could wish." He was talking balderdash, and he knew it. But for the moment he could not help it.

"It is," said Mackenzie, slowly. "And I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll say I'm sorry for my insolence. I really shouldn't have said that about Marie. She's a good girl, and not such a fool as you think. Oh, bother it! I don't mean that. I mean that I am sorry I vexed you. But I am afraid I could hardly get myself to say as much only"—he sprang at Whitmore, and with a powerful tug tore him from the broad slab of rock on which he was standing, throwing him unintentionally with force against the cliff side of the path. The slab on which Whitmore had been standing slid a foot or two precipice-wise, tipped over, turned turtle, and went down.

"God! I meant to give you a start, but I did not mean to cut it so fine as that," Mackenzie gasped, wiping the perspiration off his

forehead. "I saw you were standing on a shaky bit, and thought it would be a good dramatic climax to pull you off at the right moment—shake hands and all that—nearly overdid it—but it can't be helped now, and there's no good crying over it."

Whitmore said simply: "You have humiliated me better than you intended, but not more than I deserve, Mackenzie. My blackguardly bravado was so—so—low. I can't say more. I'll remember this."

"Do," said Mackenzie. "I may need a bit at my credit with you some day."

"It will be 'at call' when you need to draw on it," Whitmore returned, and recommenced his harness-work. Mackenzie left him at it.

The episode passed unnoticed in the stress of circumstances, and they did not, either of them, draw the attention of others to it. Another pair of mules were driven in front and the march was resumed. Before the evening sun was setting behind a big blue bank of mountain, Reinitz, who was now riding in the vanguard, drew rein on a broad plateau and waved the laggards on. They hurried up and gathered in a mixed crowd around him. The formation was deplorable from Dangan's point of view, but when he protested and tried to dress the ranks, he was promptly closed and suppressed, with the approval of all save his under-officer or chief of staff, Tregellis. The disgust Tregellis professed at the appearance of the parade quite

equalled that of his superior, and his language was equally unprintable.

A plain, sixty miles across, surrounded on every side by mammoth mountains, lay before them. This splendid valley, or plateau, was wooded as densely as the thickest forest through which they had passed. Sheltered by the encircling mountains, the battle of the trees and the murderous parasites which prey on them—strangling them, smothering them, sucking their blood—this fight to a finish had here been fought to a finish, and only the strongest had survived. These rioted in their triumph, and gave no quarter with an almost biblical ferocity. It was a magnificent panorama—a splendid parade of the victorious. Reinitz was about to explain in his quiet way, but Mackenzie thundered :

“Speech, speech ! Man, it would move a Quakers’ meeting ! Spout it out, Reinitz ! Order in the ranks ! ’Tention ! Hear the speaker ! ”

Dangan tried at the last moment to get three troopers on the left flank into line, but Mackenzie yelled at him not to be an ass, and he desisted. A short delay, however, was made to bring Marie and the Signora into a more prominent position, as was proper when they were the only ladies of the party. Marie looked on with a pleased face at the proceedings, about which altogether there was more pomp and circumstance than any which had preceded them. The Signora, too, was beam-

ing. All had caught the infectious gaiety of the scene, the triumph of an end achieved. Reinitz dropped his superior smile and began seriously :

"We have come through the only pass so far as I know, or, I believe, any living man knows, in the range we have crossed. The valley before you lies on the only highway which still connects two enormously rich and extensive tracts of country, which was the main thoroughfare between two civilisations. And in this happily situated plain I myself have discovered the memorials of a city which, like Palmyra, Byzantium—or any other of the private, municipal, or natural robbers of history—sat down and took toll. Like them it filled its granaries with the surplus food of thousands of miles of cultivation. Like them it stocked its emporiums with the goods of every lesser activity within its power of suction. Like them—as you will find evidence in abundance—it wasted its substance in riotous and rascally living. Like them, and like all parasitic growths—as you have seen in the forests we have passed through, as well as read in the records of mankind—when it had killed the entity on which it existed, it perished in its turn.

"Served it right!" Mackenzie ventured.

"In that valley," Reinitz went on with stronger emphasis, "till I chanced on it, the foot of man probably had not been set for many thousand years. These mountains, it

is true, figure in most modern maps. But the series are marked as a single range. There are really two, and between them, in this gorgeous carnival of floral glories, lie the ruins which will be our Golconda! Without taxing your patience, I may be permitted a word on the extraordinary object lesson which we shall meet on the finality of organic life, and the eternity of some of the toys for which it strives and fights and rends itself to pieces! We shall find here the evidence left behind it of a civilisation's primal emergence from barbaric chaos, its evolution, its disintegration, and its death. And there lie those toys for which it fought, almost untouched by the lapse of centuries. Their gold——"

"Who said they had gold?" Whitmore asked quietly. "I understood you were positive they had none."

Mackenzie stopped to look after some buckle in his saddlery, which had, hypothetically, become loose.

"I used the word," Reinitz explained hurriedly, "as a figure of speech, as the most exact figure I could command. For if they did, perchance, use gold, it will no doubt be untouched by time, as fresh as if it had lain all these centuries in the mines from which it was won."

"Quite so!" Whitmore agreed. "An excellent—figure of speech!"

The further interruption annoyed Reinitz, and he broke off his discourse by raising his

cap and waving it above his head, shouting as he did so : " This is the real El Dorado, for which, since Sebastian de Belacazar ordered the first expedition in fifteen hundred and thirty-five, all the world's fools have been vainly seeking." He paused and cried more strenuously, the carefully-worn, impalpable mask passing from his face :

" El valle del Dorado ! "

Mackenzie gave a tremendous cheer and roared :

" El valle del Dorado ! "

Whitmore found himself, to his own surprise, joining hysterically in the cry, and Dangan, who had been primed beforehand, gave a word of command. With that the riflemen rattled off a *feu de joie*, and a mighty din arose in which the strongest note was :

" El Dorado ! El Dorado ! "

CHAPTER XX.

THE EDEN OF THE WEST.

FORTUNATELY, the descent into the valley of El Dorado was easier and shorter than the ascent of the pass on the other side of the range. The explorers were, in consequence, able to reach a convenient camping place before night again interrupted their journey. It was the evening of another day before they reached that journey's end.

The expedition, over which Reinitz and Mackenzie seemed to claim joint control, rested some days after the toilsome march, and then commenced on its labours. The excavating party was made up of several races with many points of difference, but one in common, which served as a bond. They had, none of them, any temperamental bias toward hard work, and had to be kept at their task by constant persuasion, much of it of a nature which would not be within Trade Union usage. When they did commence in earnest they made a rapid impression on the ground they were digging at, both by reason of their numbers and the nature of the stratum—

easily worked vegetable mould, in which were intertwined, no doubt, innumerable roots, trunks, and branches, but these were less formidable than solid rock.

Commencing at the place where volcanic action, probably, had exposed that portion of ruins which Reinitz had previously discovered, good progress was made, and every day brought some new treasure-trove to light. They had only entered on the work when they found that, much as the records of Babylon were baked into bricks, so the annals of El Dorado were carved into marble. Compared with these labels, more fitted for eternity than time, the perishable records of modern days are as ephemeral as the work of the jerry-builder beside the pyramids. All buildings and a great number of monuments, as well as the very paving of the streets, were marble of a beautiful quality. The mountains around were exhaustless beds of it, but the scars which El Dorado miners had scored deep into their sides had long been cicatrized by the conciliating influence of Time.

Thus the ruins of a city, which had been entombed so many thousand years, were resurrected, and a rich harvest was reaped by the eager archæologists, who pursued their research with growing interest as each fresh find was unearthed. The architecture gave no exact clue to the period of the city's existence. But some specimens were discovered which undoubtedly belonged to the rudiment-

ary stages of human building. These had evidently been preserved as mementoes, and from them it was easy to trace, step by step, the evolution of the civilisation in the memorials it had left of its progress.

But all this took time, and while one party of the expedition was excavating, another was engaged in the formation of an encampment of a more permanent nature than what could have been constructed on the march. Comfortable if not very commodious huts or bungalows were built and a portioned off. Those for the chiefs of the expedition were laid out as detached villas, each standing in its own grounds, and appropriately named to indicate the predilection of its occupant—Holyrood, Trafalgar, Mayfair, and so on. The residences for the employés were built more closely together, and formed quite a large village, the name of which was naturally El Dorado. Here the whole community soon settled down into a routine life, which would probably have become monotonous if it had not been relieved by an occasional quarrel, accompanied by a few murders, among the various breeds of men who had enlisted in the service of the explorers.

Reinitz and Whitmore were now inseparable, their work requiring constant collaboration. Coming home—the term clings—from their day's work, grimy with the dust of buried centuries, they would have been hard to recognize. But appearances under the cir-

cumstances were not much considered. Of the others, Dangan and Tregellis spent much of their leisure drilling their squad. The riflemen took their military status as seriously as their commanding officers, and firmly, if respectfully, declined to take any part in the hard work which was going on. Manual labour in any form, they explained, was not so much their object as good wages, and for all that they would have done, even if they had consented to commence, it was not thought worth troubling about. Kleinpaul spent his spare time, which was considerable, with Marie, and Mackenzie was equally attentive to the Signora. It was no longer a secret that Marie had never really assumed the position of mistress with her supposititious maid. Why they had ever chosen to masquerade in that relation Whitmore did not take the trouble to enquire. Mackenzie was more inquisitive, and found the Signora herself very communicative. What she told him he thought it wise to keep to himself pending further developments.

In the course of their investigations Reinitz and Whitmore came on a curious relic. It was a room in a house, or more likely a temple, in the decorations of which they found traces of colours. The place had been practically hermetically sealed, and these tints were probably very little altered since they had first been laid on. They were all probably weakened by the lapse of time, but their comple-

mentary or contrasting values could still be gauged. Mackenzie, it may be remembered, had thrown a doubt on the archæological significance of the studies to which Reinitz laid claim. But whether Reinitz was first or last an archæologist, Whitmore had long since decided that he *was* an archæologist. It was Reinitz who made the great discovery. He asked Whitmore's opinion on it, and waited for the verdict with an anxiety which demonstrated his unaffected interest and profound belief in his co-worker's knowledge and judgment. Whitmore did not give his opinion lightly. When he did there was no hesitation in it.

"They had evidently," he said, "not attained the mastery of colours of the Egyptians. The Egyptians handled very daringly those strong primary blues, reds, and yellow. But this is cruder—earlier."

"Yes," said Reinitz, "I had formed that opinion. But I would rather you should go on. As a man's countenance is sharpened by that of his friend, so we are all of us—no matter what we may say or think—biassed by the judgment of our neighbours. I want to hear your views unaffected by my prior opinion. You consider it pre-Egyptian?"

"I do," Whitmore said positively.

"Then this?" said Reinitz, pointing to a statue cut from the splendid marble which was once the glory of El Dorado and now its monument.

"It is not comparable with the sculpture of the Greeks."

"You agree with me, then, that the civilisation of which these are the evidences, marvelously preserved—like those wonderful memorials of past ages which the sands of Egypt are so constantly yielding up—that this civilisation antedated all of those which we are accustomed to reckon as the earliest corporate assemblages of mankind?"

"I do," said Whitmore; "but I wish to say more. I wish to say now to you, Reinitz, that, partly somewhat from your own enigmatical reservations, and partly from my friend Mackenzie's, occasionally rather preposterous attempts at accentuating the mystery to which it always seemed to me you yourself had sufficiently contributed, I was drifting into an entirely false view."

Reinitz made to interrupt politely, but Whitmore would not be gainsaid.

"I repeat, I was, notwithstanding the extreme weight of evidence to the contrary, drifting—or being forced—into the opinion that this whole expedition was bogus——"

"My dear Whitmore!"

"Hear me out. I was convinced there was some deeply disguised but essentially surreptitious motive underlying all that seemed so open and above board." He paused a moment for breath. The atmosphere in the chamber was stifling. Reinitz suffered from it too. He suffered also, for a moment, from

a choking cough, and its facial disturbance compelled him to turn away and use his handkerchief as a fan—or veil. Whitmore continued :

"I withdraw all that, and apologise for my unworthy doubts. Reinitz, you have found the cradle of the human race ! "

"I have ! " Reinitz cried in an uncontrollable burst of enthusiasm ; " and I wish you had found it with me. Then, indeed, our discovery might have been used for its own splendid purpose ; I mean—" he finished lamely, and with an air of sudden dejection which he was unable to disguise, " we could have produced this evidence ten years ago instead of now."

"That won't matter," Whitmore remonstrated. "Ten years, or ten hundred years, the splendid discovery is here. It is yours. To you, the honour of it ! To me, the work of bringing that honour home to you ! "

Reinitz seemed really moved, and did not speak for some time. Then he turned to Whitmore and said quietly, but seriously and impressively :

"To you will belong the honour of all. You deserve it. I will help you to win your full fame. You are a more exact scholar than I. I am — pardon me — a more imaginative scholar ; and, therefore, when luck aids, a more brilliant analyst. Listen to me, Whitmore. There is here more than the nimbus of the material civilisation of man. There is

here the cradle of the beliefs, faiths, superstitions, call them what you will, which have helped, or hindered, human destiny. You are a more exact authority, to repeat myself, on the significance of a gargoyle, its period, and so forth. That is less than nothing to me. All these paltry trinkets, whether an hour old, or ten thousand years old, are only valuable to me in the present, or interesting to me as antiquities, in so far as they have served the purpose of and been subservient to sentient life. You dilettanti scholars—like the devotee who turns away from the essence of his religion to worship the symbol he has used—you are so ardent in the classification of antiquities that finally you lose grip of them as evidence, and come to value them for themselves ! ”

“ Perhaps you are right,” Whitmore said thoughtfully. “ But we may also, even if unconsciously, be influenced by the same thought as yourself.”

“ Oh, no,” Reinitz deprecated. “ For that would argue the power—even if unconscious—to think. It is unnecessary to say I am not now referring to you, but the schoolmen with whom you have been hitherto pretty closely identified. Do you know,” Reinitz broke off, “ I was once very nearly sending you back. And I would have done so only for Mackenzie.”

“ I do not profess to understand Mackenzie,” Whitmore put in. “ He was a good

fellow. "And I have had not long ago reason to know he is a good fellow. But it seems our temperaments are no longer compatible. He saved my life in that terrible cañon where the mules went down. I owe him that. I will pay him if I have the opportunity."

"You might do worse," Reinitz agreed. Then he went on: "This is not what I wanted to say to you. I want to tell you—for something tells me I will never be able to say it myself—in my opinion it was from this El Dorado of ours that the wave of civilisation first set out, which has ever swept over this earth in the pathway of the sun—from the east unto the west. Here we have the nucleus both in image and hieroglyph, so far as we have translated them, of all those fundamental verities which migrated west from this spot to China and inspired Confuscius; to India, Buddha; to Persia, Zoroaster; onward with the sun through Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Great Britain, until in the cadence of the cycle America again assumes the lead, and heads the vanguard of the march of man."

"It is a profoundly interesting speculation," Whitmore said in a low voice. His mind was staggered by the intellectual perspective which Reinitz had conjured up. It had in it such vast distance, such deep shadows, such high lights, there was matter there for absorbing thought even if the picture itself was only a fancy sketch, a piece of imaginative Art.

When Whitmore spoke again his remark was wide of the immediate subject :

"And to think that I ever doubted your *bond fides* for one moment ! What a miserable imbecile I was ! "

"Oh, not at all — quite the reverse," Reinitz politely demurred. There was a curious look in his eyes as he said this. As Whitmore did not observe it, no harm was done.

CHAPTER XXI.

GOLGOTHA.

DR. WHITMORE was sitting in his bungalow one night, absorbed in the contemplation of a primordial brass helmet which he had recently added to his collection, when he received a very unexpected visit from the Signora. The girl's manner was as surprising as her visit. Usually very self-possessed, she was now so plainly agitated Whitmore at once assumed that his professional services were required.

"Miss Reinitz! She is ill?" he asked anxiously.

"Miss Reinitz is not unwell, but it is on her account I am here." The girl stopped and seemed greatly embarrassed. Whitmore tried to reassure her; spoke on some trivial El Dorado gossip; showed her the last found curiosities; but it was useless. Finding his well-meant efforts vain, he said gravely:

"I am sure your trouble is serious, or you would not be here at this hour. Tell me what it is. You will find me sympathetic, even if I cannot assist you." His own alarm was growing, for this bold-faced girl had never

before shown so much diffidence. She appeared to make up her mind suddenly, and then, before giving her resolution time to falter, she attacked her subject with a rush :

" I know you are very kind, Dr. Whitmore, and you are the only one to whom I can tell this. You have been so wrapped up in your discoveries here that you have not seen that Marie and—and—Kleinpaul are always together——"

" I do not care for Kleinpaul. I disapprove of his society for Miss Reinitz. I have told her so, and I have told her father so. What more can I do ? "

" Oh, a great deal ! " the girl answered, with a touch of scorn in her voice. She was disappointed with the reception of her information. It increased the awkwardness of her own position. She determined to rouse Whitmore, and succeeded admirably. " You could do many things—for instance, you could kill Kleinpaul. To shoot him would be the most convenient way, I should say."

He steadied his voice before speaking, and said with painful deliberation :

" You propose that I should murder Kleinpaul ? "

" You can call it murder if you like ; but I said shoot him. It is sometimes done in the most law-abiding places. It is the only thing to be done here. If I were a man——" she stopped and turned her face from him.

" You have said too much or too little. Do

you suggest that—that—I would be justified in shooting Kleinpaul ? ”

“ I was not altogether in earnest,” the girl said, in a low voice. “ But if I did suggest shooting him it was in order that the shooting might—be in time. I don’t know what I am saying,” she suddenly burst out, pacing the little room in a nervous way. “ I don’t know what hold this Kleinpaul has over Marie. I feel sure she hates him, but she does his bidding like a dog—and—and—I am really in misery about her. My story is too long to tell you now. I know a great deal about the real object of this expedition—I don’t mean that,” she corrected hastily, and the colour faded from her face. “ Of course you know much more than I do about all these things they are finding.”

“ Yes,” Whitmore agreed, “ I do perhaps know more than you—about that side of the expedition.”

It was so very recently that he thought he had got rid of that note of mystery, and here it was again. It had been persistent from the first. He was still far from clear of it. The girl saw she had blundered, and did not try to redress the error—only, as she knew, to make it worse. But she judged rightly that her next observation would displace it.

“ Kleinpaul meets her in the square in that place you called Golgotha. They have it to themselves, as the natives are afraid to go near it, believing it to be haunted.”

There was then one of those dramatic pauses which mean so much, on or off the stage. The girl was not really ill-disposed at heart, and she had not blurted out this in order to give him pain, or in any spirit of revenge for Whitmore's slighting inattention to the friendly advances she herself had formerly made towards him. She had an unpleasant duty to do, and did it thoroughly, and was glad to be done with it.

"When is Kleinpaul likely to meet her there?" Whitmore asked steadily.

"He is likely to meet her there in half an hour."

That was enough. Whitmore thanked the girl, and escorted her back to the bungalow occupied by Reinitz, Marie, and herself.

"You will stop this?" she asked before leaving him.

"I will stop it to-night," he replied.

Whitmore went back to his hut and immediately prepared for the matter he had undertaken. This did not take long, for his actions were methodical, although there was an absent, dead look on his face. He wrote a short note to Mackenzie, and placed it in a conspicuous position, so that anyone entering the room would find it immediately. Then he opened a drawer and took out a heavy revolver. He examined the cartridge chambers and, finding two empty, he filled them, and put the revolver in his pocket. His preparations

were complete. He left the hut and started for Golgotha.

From the number of skeletons they found at this place, which they had named Golgotha, it must have been a cemetery at some period of its history. The natives gave it a wide berth, as the Signora said, and it was weird enough at night to justify their ill opinion of it. It was a dreadful place. But its gruesome appearance, and its rich yield in dead men's bones, gave Whitmore no concern. He walked on through this primeval graveyard unoppressed by its dread associations, his mind running in an agony of jealousy and hate. In some ways this man Kleinpaul was more than his match. A mere scoundrel is easily dealt with : a man of honour, however clever, is bound by the limitations of his own conscience. But a man who is both clever and unscrupulous is a match for any dozen. Kleinpaul was a brilliant blackguard, and in many of the polite passages which had taken place between them, Whitmore was easily and efficiently worsted.

If Whitmore had only himself to consider he would, on proving Kleinpaul's superior tactics, have withdrawn from the field. It is the only thing to do. Yet it could not be done in this instance. So he was forced into the humiliation of being worsted in almost every engagement, and yet constantly obliged to offer battle afresh. Marie had watched their covert strife with a calmness which

would have been callous—if she were really quite responsible ; which was another matter.

The ghastly solitude they called Golgotha had an unholy look in the bright moonlight. The memorials of primeval man frowned at the sacrilegious mortal who had helped to awake them from their hallowed sleep. Grotesque images, buildings, battlements were distorted into still weirder shapes by the white light and deep shadow as Whitmore tramped along a place which many thousand years ago had been a street. He came to the open square which had been uncovered, and there crouched assassin-like behind a wall, and watched the shadow of the pillar above his head move slowly over a moon-lit marble slab like the shadow on a dial face. He waited until he felt sure that the meeting he meant to intercept had been postponed for this occasion, and was about to leave his hiding-place when he heard slow footfalls coming, it would seem, his way. He looked over the top of the wall, not showing himself more than he could help. Two figures were approaching. At the distance, and owing to the deep shadow they walked in, he could not distinguish who they were, but presently when they came full into the bright light of the moon they were all too plain—Kleinpaul and Marie. They came nearer. He could hear what they were saying. It was odious but necessary. He listened.

“I have told you,” Kleinpaul said, in a

low voice, "you must consent whether you wish it or not."

"And if I refuse?" Marie answered softly, but resolutely.

"If you refuse! But you will not refuse. You know—the penalty."

"I do. But suppose I defy you—and the penalty?"

"You will do neither. You dare not."

"You threaten."

"Of course I threaten. And what is more important, I will carry out my threat!"

"No, no," the girl pleaded in a strangely humble way for her. For whether mad or sane she had never shown any want of spirit. Whitmore quite mistook the cause of her agitation on the night of the storm. Yet now she seemed to break down. Kleinpaul had spoken roughly, almost rudely; and she was beseeching him. The change was extraordinary. It was more, surely, than a symptom. In the strong moonlight Whitmore, from his hiding-place, could see the tears in her eyes as she said with a stifled sob:

"Your honour!"

"To save argument, assume that I have compromised with my conscience—by suppressing it."

"As a soldier!"

"Does not apply," he interrupted harshly.

"Scipio is a myth."

"Then you will not have mercy."

"I will have no mercy, and no one shall prevent me——"

"Have you reckoned on me?" Whitmore said in a cold, steady voice, as he stepped out from the shadow in which he had been standing. Marie sprang back with a cry, but Kleinpaul never stirred—hardly seemed surprised. He replied with easy indifference, almost amiably:

"Of course, I have reckoned on you, Whitmore. What would you make of me? Not reckon on you! You were the first man I reckoned on, and"—he strode close to Whitmore and glared into his eyes, his own evil face contorted, his white teeth showing as he snarled—"and you will be the last man I'll reckon with."

"You are right," said Whitmore in the same even voice. "When I have done with you, your reckoning will be paid. Meantime, choose your way from this spot, and walk speedily in it, if you mean to walk this earth ten seconds more."

"You propose a duel?"

"No. I propose an execution."

"You counted on my being unarmed and came armed yourself. You took no chances. You cur!"

"I knew nothing," Whitmore said, still calmly, "as to whether you would be unarmed or a walking arsenal. So I took all chances—personally: none otherwise."

"Might I ask the favour of a little clearer

explanation? As you have allowed me to live those ten seconds—not a very liberal allowance—perhaps you will be good enough to say more precisely what you mean.” Kleinpaul knew that he was talking practically down a pistol’s throat, but he never lost his nerve for a moment. Whitmore found that, in spite of his own wish, he could not help admiring the scoundrel’s courage. Marie stood off—with her hand on her heart. They had edged away from her as they spoke, so that she could not hear their conversation. She could hardly assume it to be friendly.

“I will explain,” Whitmore agreed. “It is this way: when I came here to meet you I expected you would be armed. I could not, I knew, bring myself to kill you without warning, and I also knew that if you had a weapon with you, it would simply be a matter of who could shoot first. So far as I am concerned—personally—I took that chance. But then if you had managed, let us say, to shoot first and straight, I would have been killed for trying to prevent a crime, and you would have gone free in order to commit one. That chance it would have been criminal to take. I did not do so. Had you killed me to-night, Mackenzie would have had you hanged to-morrow. Now begone!”

Kleinpaul raised his cap in a sarcastic salute, and said:

“You have played the best card to-night,

Whitmore. The trick is yours. But the game is not yet over. *Au revoir!*"

"You have sent him away," Marie said in a parched voice. "You were not—rude to him?"

"I am afraid I was rather rude," Whitmore admitted drily. "But it is not of any consequence now. Come back with me at once. I will see that your father is informed of this nonsense unless you promise me to meet this man no more."

Marie did not answer him, but when he had brought her back she said coldly, as he was leaving her:

"You acted for the best—probably with the worst results."

"I was under the impression," Whitmore said very bitterly, "that I had saved you from an imminent—er—annoyance; an unwelcome attention."

"It is well to be sure when you save a woman," Marie said deliberately, "that—she wants to be saved."

Thereafter she sat in her own room, dry-eyed, it is true, but moaning softly all through the night. She made no pretence at sleep or preparation for it; only moaned and muttered over and over the harsh exclamation of disgust with which Whitmore left her.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW.

"HAVE you shot Kleinpaul?" Mackenzie demanded somewhat fiercely, as he burst into Whitmore's bungalow. "I came here last night to look for you, and found this precious letter instead."

"I have not shot Kleinpaul, and I am sorry you got that letter. It was, I regret, gone before my return."

"Heavens! Whitmore, you gave me a terrible start." Mackenzie threw himself into a chair with a sigh of immense relief, and continued:

"I won't say a word about that letter now, Whitmore, except this: in it you appealed to me as the executive head of this expedition, while it is absent from the proper authorities of civilisation, to bring Kleinpaul to justice if he injured——"

"To hang him if he murdered me."

"Well, we'll not higgie over phrases. What I want to say is, if I am the executive head—and you have appealed to me as such—there are to be no private executions in my

bailiwick. You yourself, considering the brevity of the document, put the case in a manner that might be read before the Incorporated Law Society. You're an extraordinary fellow at that sort of thing. I accept your argument, and I demand your submission to constituted authority—that's me! Observe me well!"

There was an effort at his old uproarious style in this happy thought, but Mackenzie's face was very serious, and his eyes were anxious. In a few weeks he had managed to develop a careworn look with singular success. Whitmore answered him at once.

"If you mean the matter between myself and Kleinpaul—"

"Which, surely to heaven, isn't a shooting matter. She would rather have you than a hundred of him," Mackenzie interrupted, with a force and directness that put Whitmore out of countenance.

"The matter between myself and Kleinpaul is settled in a simpler and more peaceable manner. It is at an end."

"I am delighted to hear it," Mackenzie exclaimed heartily. "It would have been an awful business if it had gone further—awful. Kleinpaul could ruin everything."

Whitmore turned to Mackenzie, and said sharply: "You seem to be in great anxiety about Kleinpaul. If he had shot me—in your bailiwick—what would you have done?"

"My duty," he answered shortly but

DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW. 219

sufficiently, for Whitmore did not press the point, and seemed sorry he had raised it.

"What were you supposed to be doing when I came in?" Mackenzie then asked, to get away from a painful matter, which, having lapsed, it was useless to discuss further.

"Clearing up?"

"Packing up. Or, to put it in your terms, and more exactly, I was supposed to be packing up."

"You seem to have made a pretty tolerable job of it, considering that you were only supposing it." Whitmore's personal baggage was ranged about the room, most of it strapped, ready to travel.

"It is this way," he explained with a cheerless smile. "I have made up my mind to retire from your syndicate. A—something—has occurred which makes it imperative on me, a point of honour with me—in short, it is necessary to my own self-respect to leave at once. Therefore, I am naturally packing up."

"And where does the supposing come in?"

"I have made up my mind to go. But my wish to remain will unmake it. I am packing up as a concession to my self-respect. I will unpack to-morrow in accordance with my inclination. I am not good at pretence, to anyone—least of all to myself. That's why I put it so bluntly."

"I think it is very prettily put, Whitmore; but isn't it more like what I would do than what you would do?"

"It is more than like. It is identical Under the circumstances, the wisest man and the greatest fool——"

"Oh, thanks, thanks," Mackenzie interrupted, with a powerful laugh which was quite spontaneous, "You are too complimentary, far too flattering. I never set up for being—the wisest man!" He laughed again boisterously at the little dialectical pit Whitmore had dug for himself and obligingly walked into. His humour was infectious, and Whitmore perforce joined in the laugh at his own expense, although his heart was far from light.

Dangan was passing, and the executive head of the expedition hailed him from the window. He left Whitmore with a congratulatory thump on the back, saying, "I haven't had a laugh for a week, and I owe you that one." Then with a stentorian, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!" he overtook Dangan, and the two heads—civil and military—repaired to the canteen to carry out part, at least, of the programme.

Whatever Mackenzie may have told the military chief, it brought Dangan in some anxiety to Whitmore's bungalow as soon as he could get away from the canteen. When the old fellow came in, Whitmore noticed his embarrassed manner, and tried to put him at ease, but without much success. This distressed him, for everyone in the expedition

DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW. 221

liked Dangan's simple nature, and no one in it would willingly see him troubled. There was nothing, however, to be done but let him take his own time. He commenced at last with great hesitation.

"I am sure you are too good a fellow, Whitmore, to take offence at me if I happened to meddle a bit in your affairs, out of my interest in you."

"The man who takes offence at you is no friend of mine," Whitmore said heartily, and it reassured his visitor. He stammered out without further delay :

"I am afraid something has happened—between you and Marie—now don't be a bad fellow—I want you to let me advise you not to judge her hastily."

"I do not consider I have any right to judge her at all."

"Ah, that settles it. Then you have quarrelled. Now listen to me, Whitmore," he went on seriously, and not in his usual colloquial style, a most friendly look the while in his kind old face ; "I don't profess to know all about this extraordinary expedition any more than you do yourself—or about all the people in it. Nor do I know why Marie allows that fellow Kleinpaul to follow her about. But I know it is not her own private wish——"

"Pardon me," Whitmore interrupted sharply, "I happen to have precise information that it is her private wish."

"And I have precise information that it is not."

"My information is from the girl herself."

"So is mine. She would tell me the truth. Why would she tell me anything but the truth? You're different. She might not tell you quite the truth. If I was thirty years younger"—he squared himself with a little bantering effort—"she might not tell me all the truth. We need not go into the reasons, but you may as well admit the fact. Now here's what I came to say, and I have always said it. Marie is a good girl. Not a bit of harm in her, not a bit! And if you want proof——"

"I have not asked you for proof," Whitmore said coldly, as his visitor paused, apparently at a loss.

"You shall have it then whether you ask or not. Marie has been carrying on—er—ridiculously with Kleinpaul, but if the girl wasn't straight, I ask you, would my wife—a very capable woman, though I say it; most capable—would my wife have taken to her as she did? I ask you that."

The old fellow's earnestness and his lapse into his ordinary and familiar manner, were too much for Whitmore, who thawed perceptibly, and agreed to a compromise which sent Dangan away well pleased with himself, as indeed he had a right to be if the intention counts. If he called at the canteen—just to see if Mackenzie was still there—it was only

DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW. 223

natural. And if, finding Mackenzie had gone, he had something for himself for the good of the house, it is only an old and respected custom.

When he was alone, Whitmore sat on one of the numerous packages scattered about the room, and reconsidered, for the twentieth time, the position in which he found himself. He knew that after his threat of the previous night, he stood in the most serious danger from Kleinpaul. In such a place, such a quarrel must come sooner or later to the stern arbitrament of the pistol's mouth. Had the conditions of the previous night been reversed, and Kleinpaul armed instead of himself, he believed he would have been shot on the spot. El Dorado was an undesirable place for him, and he would not be safe till he was well outside it. Reinitz surely could not object, and Mackenzie, it was only too evident, would be greatly relieved. Then, while he was prepared to stay and take his chance, fight for the girl if necessary, who ever heard of a man fighting for a girl after she had plainly implied she did not want him, that she preferred the man he wanted to fight? Dangan's mediation was well meant, but his evidence was unreliable. He would go. He would get on with his preparations. He hastened slowly.

Meantime, it transpired that, having very unexpectedly received one lady visitor recently at the bungalow, Whitmore was

destined to receive presently a not less surprising visit from another. It was not usual for him to be favoured with so much company in his bungalow. The second lady visitor was even more hesitating and embarrassed than the first, and not less interesting. In some respects, her story, when she found voice to tell it, was similar to that of the Signora; half confidences; manifest reservations; and withal an earnest endeavour to do what was right and speak the truth—within certain limits. There were dark rings round Marie's eyes after her sleepless night. They appealed to his professional interest. There was a nervous hesitancy and modesty in her manner which would have appealed to him as a man—had it not been for the termination of last night's adventure. He refused to hear her until she was seated, and exhausted the simple possibilities of the place for her comfort. But between his manner of the moment and of the day before there was a difference that turned her cold. She commenced with a painful diffidence that would have been pathetic—if he had not nursed his wrath carefully.

"It's about what I said last night—what you said last night—that I came."

"That subject is closed—between us." Whitmore said firmly.

"No, no," she pleaded; "you would not be so harsh. I was distracted last night when I said—that. You do not understand

my difficulties. If you did you would excuse——"

"*Nothing* would excuse what you said."

Finding a direct attack impracticable, Marie wisely tried a turning movement.

"The Signora, as you call her, was here yesterday."

"Last night," he corrected.

"And told you I was meeting Kleinpaul."

"She indicated something of the sort," Whitmore admitted.

"And in consequence you came last night, and were prepared to kill a man, or be killed yourself, in my interest?"

"I believe I had some such intention," Whitmore said cheerfully, as though the triviality were no longer worth consideration.

"And yet when I come here to try to explain, you won't allow me. You are willing to be killed for me, yet you won't do as much as any man would do for a girl—in distress." Marie said this with a look that went to his heart. It was not altogether of stone.

"Your presence here repairs what you said last night, and I hope, signifies that you have forgiven me for what I said last night."

"Oh, as to that, I think that what you said was perfectly right, considering what I said. But it gave me a bad night all the same,"

"It is for you now to forgive me," he said, quite humbly. Resolution was going, and he made haste to speed the parting guest.

"There are some things in this expedition

which I do not wholly understand, and cannot therefore explain, even if I were willing," Marie continued.

"I gathered something of the same nature from the Signora. She seemed about to explain—and stopped in time. Mackenzie was here this morning. He is quite as enigmatical. Poor old Dangan, too, seems to have more on his mind than is good for him. Let us pass these mysteries, therefore, and get on." His tone had frozen again at the accursed suggestion of mystery.

"There are some things which I am here to explain."

He merely bowed.

"I have come to explain—for I can bear it no longer—the part which fell to me in all the trickery which has been practised on you. It is hard to do so. Don't make it harder!"

"That is not my wish. But I do not know what I can do to help you."

"You must ask my father and your own friend, Mackenzie—your own friend, Mackenzie," she repeated. "Ask them why they were so terribly earnest in their desire to implicate you in this expedition. I am only responsible as—what is it you say?—an accessory to the fact. I was set on you to—to inveigle you."

"I partly suspected that."

"And I did."

"You did."

"And I did it deliberately."

"No, you did not—deliberately."

"You believe that?"

"Yes—else I should not say it."

"What else do you believe?"

"I believe you were not always conscious—responsible—for your actions. Still, but for you, I would not be here; should never have been in—all this."

"Now, I presume, you will go away; go back. You have given me up?"

"Personally, yes; professionally, no. After what you said—about Kleinpaul—I am only at liberty to consider you as a patient. I will not resign your case until you yourself dismiss me—not for a thousand Kleinpauls!"

The emphasis on the last clause pleased her well. She laughed lightly, but in a mirthless way, and continued:

"Then, speaking to you as my physician, I declare that owing to an accident, about which my father took the best opinion in Europe, I was subject to delusions. The doctors said I would recover, and I have recovered. For reasons which your friend Mackenzie knew—toward which he was contributory—my father, acting in the belief that he was pursuing a high and worthy object, used me as a decoy to interest you; just as in turn he meant to use you; just as he is using Mackenzie; just as he even used me to keep Kleinpaul safe—and would sacrifice me to keep him safe."

He sprang to his feet with a passionate exclamation, but she interposed.

"Oh, spare me that!" she cried as furiously as himself. "As if generations of fathers who held their heads as high as kings, did not sacrifice their daughters; as if a million fathers do not sacrifice their daughters for rank, wealth, family convenience or family necessity! Pah! Dr. Whitmore, the Chinese parent who kills his surplus daughters is merciful."

"You pain me inexpressibly by your wild words," he said gravely. "But I was to blame also. It was my fault."

"Forgive me. I will try to keep to the subject that brought me here," she agreed, and went on more calmly: "I did know that I was expected to allure you: I did try to do so: but I do not remember a scintilla of that preposterous dance I led you on the Inniskerry moor. That was the last of my delusions, which my father and your friend considered to be positively providential. They said it made sure of you. It is rather a contradiction; but that night I must have been absolutely sincere, if silly. In all else I have been false. Now I have told you my story—as much of it as I dare. Curse me and go. You are in danger here. Get away; drop this expedition; it is all sham—your part of it, I mean. Leave it to perish in its own intrigue. Leave me to perish with it. I have warned you. But I must tell you that

DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW. 229

notwithstanding my—I mean I shall miss you—greatly—when you go—I would not have warned you only that I believe you are too good a man to betray even—a bad woman. It is hard to be only nineteen—and feel old," she finished with a moan that stabbed.

He hardened his heart and said slowly : "I believe you exaggerate unintentionally. What do you mean"—he caught his left hand in his right, and the nails of his clenching fingers cut the skin. He had only done that once before—at his first visit to the amputation theatre. "What do you mean by—a bad woman ? "

The blood swept over her face in a painful rush. But she held her head high and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"I mean a woman who has done violence to her best feelings : who has sacrificed much to what she thought a justifying purpose. I said something like this to you the night of the storm at sea. Do you want any more ? "

"Yes, I want more."

"You are hard. But you shall have your answer. I do not mean—Kleinpaul."

"Then," said he in a cold, quiet voice, but with a glare in his eyes that frightened her ; "those who have put this shame upon you, the shame of my question, the shame of your having to answer it ; those, I say, will answer to me. And I will not be easily answered."

"Where are you going now ? " she cried, stepping between him and the door to bar his

exit. Her voice was strained and unnatural. Her breath came fast.

"Going? Oh, I am going to pay some visits—to Kleinpaul for one. I shall also look in on my friend Mackenzie — incidentally."

"Do not go to Kleinpaul," she gasped.

"You have said that he is nothing to you. Am I to be for ever tortured by your moods?"

"No; but don't—don't—go to him."

A jealous rage shook him. He spoke again, passionately. "Perhaps you fear for him?"

"No, I fear him."

"Then I will rid you of him. Let me pass."

She stood out of his way and made no further attempt to detain him. He turned as he opened the door and looked back. She was standing in the middle of the room in an unconsciously statuesque pose. There was a grace in her slight but beautifully moulded figure that the more voluptuous charms of the Signora could never reach. Her face was pale, even through the brown which the tropic sun had burned into it. It looked ghastly with that warm aureole of rich-tinted hair—yet, withal, very girlish, in spite of its tragic expression, and pitiful beyond description. Her despair might, in one less personally attractive, have been abject; but there was that subtle distinction in her manner always, for which language has not yet found words. It lent her simplest actions charm. It clothed her now tragic presence with a splendid dig-

DR. WHITMORE'S BUNGALOW. 231

nity. She would plead to him no more, but face her own fate without his help, unsupported by his sympathy. Let him go. Yet when he turned, her heart failed, and she cried with a sobbing wail :

"I stand on a precipice, and I hold out my hands and cry to you to save me ; but you pass on and leave me to perish." She held out her arms to him, and cried with a passionate entreaty, "Do not desert me. Maurice—Maurice—Save me !"

CHAPTER XXIII.

BURIED ALIVE.

"AND now," said Marie, "when you trust me at last, I want you to meet me to night where you met me last night with Kleinpaul——"

"Golgotha!"

"Yes, Golgotha. There is something there, or near it, which, if I knew what it was, would explain the hold this man Kleinpaul has over my father, and, through him, me."

"I will meet you at Golgotha."

"I was sure you would—I hate to seem so prudish with you: you are such a good fellow," she whispered softly, "but you musn't do that—at least not so much." Presently her voice changed from the little cooing trills, and she said short and sharp:

"Kleinpaul will be with my father to-night. I heard them arrange it. I—I—I am afraid I listened—but I made a discovery, in consequence of which, if you knew of it, you might be able to help me. Will you come with me to-night to that dreadful place, Golgotha? Will you trust me a little longer and come?"

"Yes, I trust you and will go," he answered simply.

They parted—by agreeable instalments—until the hour for their tryst.

During the time that intervened, Whitmore occupied himself busily with his memoirs. His history of El Dorado had been written up day by day as the work of exploration went on, and no matter how the expedition terminated for himself, he was determined that archæological research should be the gainer by his knowledge. He had as much material, without touching the main substance of the book he was preparing, as would keep the learned society, of which he was a member, engaged for the term of its natural life. This whiled the weary hours away until it was time to start for the place of the meeting.

It was with a better spirit that Whitmore set out for his second visit to Golgotha, by pale moonlight, than that which oppressed him on his first. The two were alike in one respect. They had both every probability of personal danger. But what of that! Last night he strode austere. This night he marched aglow. "Poor girl," he murmured as he walked; "what a hell her life must have been in this choking atmosphere of intrigue. I wonder will she really tell me the whole secret? Poor Meyer, too!"

They met in the great square, and Marie turned at once toward an avenue leading to a huge mound where excavation had just begun,

whence indeed the excavators had that day fled in terror owing to some unearthly, or at least subterranean sounds. Whitmore stopped and said in a hesitating voice :

"Oh, Marie, not this way!" He knew the way, and dreaded it for her sake.

"I cannot help it," she answered, turning away her face. "There is no other way." Then she added resolutely. "Besides, my character is neither made nor marred by—by—that, any more than yours."

"The reproof is just," he said, and objected no more.

They passed on.

The moon was as bright as on the previous night, and the memorials of the primeval dead were as garish and ghostly in its relentless light as before. Along this thoroughfare which had been "no road" for many centuries, the relics of the past changed in character. Among many crude and childlike architectural devices, others, hideous beyond imagination, unspeakably obscene, grinned at them, glared at them. A living caricaturist is at least a living liar, and often a genial one. But the buffoonery of these clowns who themselves were dead ten thousand years, was altogether bestial. It was heavy with the weight of ages by which it had outlived its creators. It was appalling.

In the mound from which the excavators had fled there was a wide cave, an entrance apparently to some subterranean chambers,

which would, as soon as work could be resumed, be duly unearthed. Whitmore knew of this, but did not know that it was the objective of Marie's journey. When they came to it, she said abruptly :

"Maurice, I do not know what danger I may be leading you into. But whatever it may be, before God, I share it with you."

"You pain me, Marie, by adding that. I said I trusted you. You know I do."

"Then I will not be afraid whatever may befall."

He lit a small lamp which he had brought at her suggestion, and she led the way into a passage which, but for it, would have been as dark as Erebus. It was a lair of slimy, creeping things ; a tomb that had not been opened since before the birth of historic man ; a charnel-house, millenniums old, that the sacrilegious hands of the explorers had wakened from many thousand years of sleep—full of fearful associations to appal the mind ; full of hideous crawling things to jar the flesh ; dropping green ooze thick with the residual paste of a thousand generations of mummied dead, and stubbly with mouldering bones ; and the smell was that of a grave which had been opened before its time. Into this place the girl would have walked first, but he stepped before her, notwithstanding that she seemed, mysteriously, to be the one who knew the way.

The passage had many turnings, and these

were all rectangular, an advancing zig-zag in which Whitmore soon lost all idea of how he stood as to the entrance, and from the intermingling of crossing zig-zags, had no notion of the way back. He whispered this fear to Marie more than once, and their voices sounded ghastly in that vault. But she seemed hardly to understand what he said and only answered in a dreamy, hypnotized tone :

"I know the way. I know the way."

They went on cautiously, for the light from the small lamp Whitmore carried lit the place but dimly, and a stumble there must bring horrible effects. At last, when he had seriously thought of insisting on giving up the quest and going back, Marie said, "We are nearly there now. We have arrived," she added, and stopped.

Whitmore increased the power of the lamp, and turned the light round. They were in a large apartment, in the centre of which a huge pile of some dark stuff was built up. Otherwise the place was empty. At sight of the simple character of the place, Marie cried in distress :

"I must have lost the way. There is nothing here to explain the extraordinary importance which they—my father and Klienpaul—placed on their hiding-place. We may go back. I have troubled you for nothing. There is nothing here."

"There are plenty of these, at all events,"

Whitmore said, putting his hand on one of the blocks of which the great pile in the centre of the chamber was composed. "Can they be bricks in this land of marble?" He moved the block. Its weight astonished him. "They certainly are not bricks. They must be of some extraordinary heavy metal."

Thereupon a thought flashed like lightning through his brain; it was an excerpt from the bond they had given to Reinitz; it seemed written in letters of flame all over that huge pile of metal blocks—"all precious metals, etc." His mind was reeling in the first shock of the vast perspective his imagination suggested, when Marie asked quietly:

"What is the heaviest metal?"

"Gold is one of the heaviest."

"Then that is gold! And that is the secret of the expedition to El Dorado—and of much more."

"We must return as quickly as possible," Whitmore whispered. It seemed profanity to speak above one's breath in the presence of so much money—or money's worth. "I will bring the smallest block I can find—it will be heavy enough to carry the distance—and make sure whether it is gold. If it should prove to be gold there must be millions sterling worth of it there; and your father very suitably named this place El Dorado. We shall then consider further."

They started at once, Marie carrying the lamp, and Whitmore the lightest block he

could find. It was, as he expected, a heavy weight to carry so far, but men rarely complain of the weight of gold, and this, if gold was more than money. It was the key to the mystery which had so long been abhorrent to the solving of which would be indeed triumph. They were walking as fast as the rough nature of the passage permitted, when Marie, who was going in front with the light, stopped short and turned a terrified face to him. She made a gesture of caution and whispered :

"Listen !"

His imagination must surely be playing tricks on his bodily senses. They waited a moment, hardly breathing, and then very faintly they heard a muffled :

Clink—clink—clink !

Marie put her hand to her heart as if in physical pain. He drew her close to him to support her. Her face was ghastly in the faint lamp-light. Her very lips were white. Whitmore himself was a brave man, but he would have given much at that moment to be safe out of the Hades into which the girl had led him.

Clink—clink—clink!!

"Maurice, what—what is it ?" she gasped.

"Don't give way, child," he whispered.

"Let us go on at once. Forward ! you know the way. I am still puzzled by these cross-passages. You know the plan."

"Yes—but this—noise—is in our way. It

is between us and the entrance. This must be what frightened the workpeople. They say there are spirits at Golgotha, but devils here."

Clink—clink—clink!

Then a crash of falling masonry shook the very ground they were standing on, and Whitmore, in catching her as she was falling, fainting, knocked the lamp out of her hands. It fell with a tinkle of broken glass and went out. When her senses came back, Marie gasped:

"It is all over now."

"Do you think we are blocked in?" he asked.

"Yes, we are buried alive."

A faint light showed at some distance in the dense darkness. It seemed to grow stronger, still stronger. It was coming their way. Whitmore groped with his hands along the side-wall of the passage. It was in the last stage of ruin, and in many places sections of it had fallen. He groped on till he found a huge chasm, and into this they crept. He had managed to pick up the lamp, but dared not light it now when this other light was coming. The light came slowly on. They watched it grow brighter—pass many cross-corridors—yes, it *was* coming their way.

"It is a man!" Marie gasped.

"It is," said Whitmore. "A man we know."

"A man we know?"

"It is Julius Kleinpaul."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DESERTER.

"MARIE, you must leave this to me—and you must be very brave. Kleinpaul will never voluntarily let me out of this alive. Therefore, I am afraid I must do as much for him if I can. Keep close behind that boulder. Shut your eyes—and your ears!"

"You must not kill Kleinpaul," she gasped. "You do not know what you are doing. You said you trusted me wholly—in everything. Let me go forward. I will—save your life."

"Do you think, girl, that I would save my life in that way. I'd shoot myself—and you first." Her solicitude for Kleinpaul came with an insupportable shock after her recent confidence. What was he to believe? His own dignity had been stung by the girl's capricious changes to the point at which he himself would have voluntarily resigned her that did not include giving way now to Kleinpaul. If Kleinpaul meant to take her from him now, with her kisses warm on his lips, Kleinpaul must fight for her. His voice was hoarse with jealous rage as he whispered

"Keep close behind that rock, and do not stir for your very life. This duel is to the death."

He threw a stone against the wall of the passage opposite that in which they had found a hiding-place. It smashed against the solid slab on which it fell with a reverberating crash. Kleinpaul started, stopped, and held his lamp high overhead, peering forward—only for a moment. That moment was enough. It gave Whitmore time for a fair sight. He was a good revolver shot, and when he fired at that short range you might look in the centre of the mark, if you wished to know where the bullet struck. The sound of the explosion, in the confined space, was like that of a twelve-inch gun. It thundered round and round ; came roaring back from a hundred cross-passages ; tumultuous echoes, each trying to out-shout the other, kept up the din ; it rumbled, muttered, and died down. In that many-voiced chorus the crash of Kleinpaul's lamp—at which Whitmore had fired—was unheard. The gross darkness that again supervened was terrible, for the circumstances had altered—for the worse.

"You have taken his life," Marie whispered.

"Pshaw ! I've only put out his light," Whitmore said coldly, the demon of jealousy rending his vitals.

"You have put out his light, and with it our chance of escape."

"Listen to me," Whitmore breathed into her ear. "Before I put out his light, I saw

that he was trailing after him a long cord. conclude that he has — in that crash of masonry—closed up the only known passage to the gold chamber, the one we went in by. You must have missed the way on the return journey. This is another entrance—and exit—that he alone probably knows of, but he is not sure of. Hence the cord to guide him back. You will go free by that cord's guidance, but whether in Kleinpaul's company or mine the next few shots will decide."

On that, without waiting to hear her protests, and putting down by sheer force the hand she tried to put on his lips, he shouted

"Kleinpaul! It was I, Whitmore, who fired that shot——"

Another terrific cannonade of echoes roared though the corridors. Kleinpaul had fired in the direction of the voice, and with good judgment, for the bullet touched Whitmore's cheek, and in a moment a hot trickle let the latter know he had been grazed. This proof of matchless coolness and courage on Kleinpaul's part almost disconcerted Whitmore with all his rage. Consider the circumstances under which Kleinpaul's lamp was shot out of his hand. Yet he stood his ground and shot back. But Whitmore had no alternative. He had entered wilfully on this quarrel, and must go through with it. So he called out :

"Kleinpaul, I offer you the duel now you spoke of last night. Miss Reinitz is here. Only one of us—you or I—shall go forth alive.

Let her go safely with the fortunate one. We have both lost a cartridge. I propose that neither of us replace it. I have a pocket-full, so you may take my offer as genuine."

"I accept your terms, Whitmore. And against your generosity in not shooting me instead of smashing my lamp—as you could easily have done—I put the circumstance that I could go back, taking my guiding rope with me, and leave you there, to starve to death."

"You forget Miss Reinitz is here also."

"I did, for the moment. I withdraw my contra account. It was honestly meant all the same. Are you ready?"

"Yes!"

"Then, when I count three, we shall each fire a shot to give the necessary direction. I will then fire at your flame: you at mine. My fire will be delivered in a direct line from my eye—not as far off as I can stretch my arm. Yours, I presume, will be the same!"

"Yes."

There was a moment's appalling silence, only broken by a short sob from Marie, and then Kleinpaul's voice began to count:

"One—two—three!"

Again the caverns chorused to the report, this time doubled in power—quadrupled, for following the sighting shots each man fired again as fast as he could snap the trigger. The roaring rumbled round and round as before, and gradually died down at last to silence. Then Marie's voice commanded:

"I forbid this wickedness to proceed. I am standing in the middle of the passage, Julius. If you fire again, it will be at me."

"I cannot fire again at anyone," Kleinpaul's voice answered slowly. "My right arm is broken."

Whitmore struck a match, which burned with a strong, flaring light, and while it was flaming he found his own broken lamp. He was able to light it, and, carrying it carefully, he hurried to Kleinpaul. Marie was there before him. Kleinpaul had sunk down, overcome by weakness, and the girl was kneeling beside him, supporting his head. She had not dared to touch the wounded arm lest she might injure it.

Whitmore put down his lamp, and, with skilful hands, bound Kleinpaul's arm. The bandages and splints were hastily improvised, but they were sufficient as temporary substitutes. Kleinpaul accepted quite coolly the aid of the man who had first shot and then dressed his wound. There was nothing in the manner of either of the men to suggest anything of the unusual nature of the circumstances under which they were now placed. And while Marie, too, was ready to stop the combat at the risk of her own life, and was first at the victim's side, she assisted Whitmore in bandaging the broken arm with more of the zeal of a good nurse than the solicitude of a sorrowing (girl) friend of the patient. When the surgical operation was over, Klein-

paul was helped to his feet. He had lost a good deal of blood and was very weak. He had a flask in his pocket, containing some good brandy, and, with Whitmore's approval, he took a stiff drink of it to strengthen him for the journey back to the permanent camp. It was a long walk for a man in his state. Before they started Whitmore went back for the metal block which he had dropped before the duel began.

"What are you going to do with that?" Kleinpaul asked not uncivilly; rather with a natural and pardonable curiosity when he noticed what Whitmore was carrying. This he did not observe until they were out of the subterranean pit. The fresh air of the night had helped him. The moonlight was nearly as bright as day. It was easy to see that Whitmore's parcel was of unusual weight for its size.

"I am going to see of what metal it is made," Whitmore replied at once.

"Then I can save you the trouble, and may as well tell you to-night what you would find out to-morrow. It is gold."

"I thought so, but meant to make sure."

"You can keep that lump for your—er—professional services this night. I am, I might say, a part owner. My partner, I am sure, will not object."

"It's a large fee for what I have done!" Whitmore deprecated. By this time they had arrived at the bungalows, and they

parted without any further reference to the events which had occurred. Their farewells were said with a nonchalance which would have been wonderful—if it had not been entirely artificial.

Next morning Kleinpaul and a couple of natives had disappeared. He had gone, no one knew whither, and only Reinitz knew quite the whole of the reason why he had gone. Whitmore no doubt had a fairly accurate idea of one element in the reason of his departure, and Marie, when she had time to piece together all the knowledge which was now hers, was able to push the deduction farther. But even they were short of the full explanation, and Mackenzie, notwithstanding his official position as a constituted authority, knew nothing—at the time. He was more fully informed later when an Indian scout struck a trail leading south. Since El Dorado had been discovered no one had previously gone that way. This was important. The trail must be that of Kleinpaul and the men he had taken with him. Reinitz was terribly alarmed by this news. He confided its import to Mackenzie in a single sentence:

"Kleinpaul has gone to the Government of Brazil to betray us. I wondered what was the meaning of his interest in that pass through the Southern range," Reinitz continued. "He made me describe it very minutely to him on such apparently disinterested grounds, no one would have suspected him in this—not

even I, who suspected him in everything. I actually made him a rough map of it. Oh, it was clever of me," he concluded bitterly.

"All that's rather a large hypothesis to found on the discovery of a trail running south," Mackenzie protested. They had met on the Golgotha road, and walked on for some distance before Reinitz resumed :

"I have more data than that," Reinitz at length said wearily. His face was beginning to show his years with the haste with which a well-preserved man breaks up, once disintegration begins.

"How much more?" Mackenzie asked.

"It is all owing to that wretched friend of yours, Whitmore. You remember I thought he should be sent back. And he should have been sent back, and would have been sent back, only for your obstinacy."

"Leave my obstinacy out and go on," Mackenzie interrupted sharply. They had come to the great square in Golgotha and stopped there.

"It appears from what Marie tells me, that Kleinpaul and Whitmore had their quarrel—which was always inevitable—before we were ready for it. Kleinpaul, you know, was always a source of anxiety to me. But then, in some respects, he is the strongest man in South America. Hence his selection as my co-trustee. I always feared that his honesty was not above suspicion; hence his infatuation for Marie, which is positively extra-

ordinary, was the only sure hold on which relied. That bond between us Whitmore has snapped. Kleinpaul, therefore, has thrown us all overboard, and has gone—as I always foresaw he would if ever Marie's attraction failed—to Brazil to make terms. I conveniently provided him with a map of his road. You may stop those workmen, Mackenzie. We'll dig no more at Golgotha, or El Dorado either. Call them up and tell them to leave off and prepare instead to strike camp. It is time we were on the march. We have not an hour to lose. You are a good organiser. Let me see how soon you can get this expedition on its way—back."

Reinitz spoke in a resigned but utterly hopeless tone of a man who sees the work of his life brought to nought by an accident which might have been prevented. The calamity is too great for empty lamentations. It is fate. There is nothing to be said.

"All of which, being interpreted into practical politics, means?"

"It means that we are all in the most imminent danger," Reinitz answered, still more wearily than he had yet spoken; "if we are not already lost."

"That's cheerful!" Mackenzie said quietly.

CHAPTER XXV.

MACKENZIE'S CONFESSION.

HAVING been immersed for some days in the completion of his manuscripts, Whitmore temporarily lost touch with the El Dorado syndicate, and in consequence he was the last to hear of the important desertion which had followed his subterranean adventure. That adventure, he correctly assumed, would have far-reaching results, and, pending their development, he determined that neither Kleinpaul nor even Marie would prevent him, if he could help it, from finishing the work he had undertaken; which, indeed, was well worth doing for its own sake. The extraordinary discovery of the gold was not underrated, but he concluded rightly that whatever its value, its explanation would be subordinate in interest to the history on which he was engaged. Meantime, the gold was safe where it lay. No El Dorado burglar would disturb it.

Figure to yourself, then, Whitmore's astonishment when he found the whole camp astir with preparations for departure: Reinitz

morose and unapproachable : Kleinpaul gone, Marie and her hypothetical maid stripping the decorations from their bungalow : Dangan and Tregellis with their riflemen ready to the last gaiter button : and Mackenzie working like a giant, arranging, organising, ordering. The whole transport service had become as rusty as the military discipline of Dangan's command was slackened by the long period of comparative ease and security. Whitmore soon saw that if he wished to obtain any sensible explanation of what the preparations meant he must address himself either to Reinitz or Mackenzie, although they were both difficult to reach. With this object in view he went to Mackenzie's bungalow, at an hour when work for the day would naturally be over, and was fortunate to find the owner in—tired out apparently, but happily willing to talk.

Mackenzie was standing with his hands in his pockets, his big body leant lazily against the main wall of the bungalow, a cigar in his mouth, at which he was smoking industriously—according to his habit when worried—without its being lighted. There was nothing otherwise in his attitude to indicate any specially strong preoccupation, but when Whitmore spoke he did not answer at first ; did not seem to have heard him enter the room. Whitmore then repeated his greeting more sharply, and Mackenzie exclaimed with a start :

MACKENZIE'S CONFESSION. 251

"Oh! that you, Whitmore! I thought you were still hybernating! Want to have a talk with you!"

"And I want to have a talk with you. That is why I am here. Go on," Whitmore said shortly, as he seated himself in a camp chair with the manner of a man who had come for a pretty long talk. The two men were still, physically, far from alike, Mackenzie having kept his distance in weight; but between them now, so far as an out-of-doors, man-of-action expression went, there was nothing to choose. Mackenzie's fair complexion had turned a brilliant red in the continual sun which shone over El Dorado, and Whitmore's dark skin had gone frankly black. His habit was still spare, but there was an athletic look about his build which was worth cultivating. He could have passed every man in Harley Street without a single recognition. When he was suited in the angle to which he tilted back the chair, Mackenzie began at once:

"Well then, to push off and put it short, Kleinpaul has gone, leaving evidence, in the opinion of Reinitz, that he means to desert—has deserted us—and that he likewise means to betray us right away."

"Betray us! To whom, pray, could he betray us?"

"To the Government of Brazil, it seems."

"What has the Government of Brazil to do with us?"

"For one thing, they will undertake the custody of that stack of gold you discovered by chance—and the assistance of Miss Mar—some days or nights ago. You might have been satisfied with that discovery, and not hunted Kleinpaul away to tell on us."

"I did not hunt him away."

"Not at all; by no means!" Mackenzie said crossly. "You only tried to murder him!" Then with a flash of rage, he snapped "Why the devil didn't you shoot him in the head instead of the arm? You made a pretty hash of it. If you had let him alone, or finished him, you would not have brought us to this pass." He flung the unsmoked cigar violently from him, tore open his case, and put another in his mouth, which he also omitted to light, but sucked vigorously.

Whitmore said nothing in his own defence, for the sufficient reason that he had really nothing to say. Mackenzie's blunt summary of the case was perfectly just. He could not plead the want of will to murder Kleinpaul—albeit in a sort of duel—when he fired to kill. And when he did not kill him outright, it certainly would have been better not to have fired at him at all. This, however, is applying logic to the discussion of a man's action when the man in question was in a jealous rage; which is absurd.

"Did Miss Reinitz tell you this?" Whitmore asked after a pause.

"Not likely," Mackenzie began positively.

MACKENZIE'S CONFESSION. 253

He hesitated, and continued in a slightly embarrassed manner, "She told the Signora —Miss Meyer; the girl is Meyer's sister. Their people live in Barbados. More of that anon. And of course Eugenie told me."

"Of course?" Whitmore questioned.

"Yes, if you like," Mackenzie answered stoutly. The ice between them broke with an almost audible crash.

"Here!" said Mackenzie. "Have a drop of this." He found a decanter and two thick tumblers in a rough cabinet, and put them on the table. Whitmore would have preferred shorter measure, but the host would not hear him. He mixed two stiff glasses of whiskey and water: tossed off his own, lit his cigar (a good sign), and recommenced.

"It's dry work telling this story, Whitmore, and now that I am in for it, I'll tell it out and be done with it. You won't take another drop? Well, I'll have just a mouthful myself, as I have got to do the talking. Have a cigar then! That's right. Now light up, and I'll start again. Here's luck!"

For a moment Mackenzie stood looking out over El Dorado and away to the far distance where the mountains broke the horizon line with wavy summits, varied sometimes by gigantic, outstanding peaks piercing the sky. It was with an effort that he resumed his narrative, for the scene oppressed him with the sense of failure in sight of a splendid success. His purpose at bottom was not so

lofty as that of Reinitz, but there was more in it than the mere money he had hoped to have in his hand to handle over it. There was the hard-fought, hard-won guerdon dashed from his grasp when the bugles were tuning up to blow the fanfare of victory. It was bitter, and if his nature was not of the deepest, it was deep enough to feel this keenly. He began again very quietly :

"That gold you found was the real object of the expedition. It was to be landed in England as the property of Reinitz, according to our bond. Your archæological evidence founded on the actual truth about El Dorado would have guaranteed the whole thing. The gold cannot now be landed in England as originally intended, and unless we are expeditious, we may not be able to embark it on much less land it anywhere. Your architectural specimens—some of them are beautiful, by the way—which were, such as are fit to be seen, to adorn London's vacant spaces, are abandoned. You can bring your photographs and manifold manuscripts if you can get your extra mule to keep up with the crowd, otherwise they will be abandoned. And if you are recalcitrant, you will be abandoned."

"I'll chance that!" Whitmore exclaimed.

"The financial side of the expedition is also a failure, a bigger failure than yours. Reinitz, as I said, claims under our bond for the gold, but he was to pay me a freight on it by which I stood to clear a million. That is

now abandoned. Everything is abandoned in order to save the gold ! ”

“ This gold, for which everything is to be abandoned ; what has Kleinpaul's desertion or betrayal to do with it ? It is found in a district to which no country lays claim. It is not now, and has not been for ten thousand years, the property of man. Who can challenge the claim of Reinitz to it ? Who can dispute his ownership save we ourselves ? And we have contracted ourselves out of it.”

“ There are owners enough still alive, I believe, who have a prior claim to that of Reinitz.”

“ Still alive ? ”

“ Certainly ; but they are a rather mixed community at present, and pending an arrangement with them, I think the British Government would take a paternal interest in the matter if we landed our gold on any shore which hoists the Union Jack. The Government of Brazil, to which Kleinpaul has fled, will spare no effort or force necessary to secure such a haul as fifty millions sterling. It would put their country on a sounder financial basis than it has been for many a long year.”

“ The Government of Brazil might take a liberal view of their own rights, but surely the British Government might be trusted to act justly.”

“ That's what bothers us. We are satisfied that the British Government would act

justly, and we are therefore anxious to give a wide berth. I am burst in any case, and don't care. But Reinitz is going to have a shot for it. He thinks if he had his stuff on the *Argosy* in the open sea it would take a small ship to catch him. And he thinks he knows where he can hide the *Argosy* till even the most mature, or he has had time to consider his position."

Whitmore thought over very carefully what Mackenzie had just told him. Bit by bit the whole web began to piece itself together in his mind. His employment by Reinitz was, on Mackenzie's evidence, an open fraud. It was the gold, not the archaeological treasure, that was the object of the expedition. Mackenzie's part, too, would bear further explanation, and as he appeared now in a more communicative humour than he had been since the *Argosy* sailed from the cliffs of Croaghnaun, the present was the best opportunity for clearing everything up.

"About this gold, Mackenzie——"

"That gold," Mackenzie interposed, although he had not to be asked in order to complete his confession, "is not, as you may have thought, 'old gold' in any sense. It has been drained from various South American States for the past twenty years. More than one president has been assassinated while assisting to collect it. It was remitted in various forms and by judicious instalments to bankers in Europe; there turned into gold

shipped back across the Atlantic as opportunity served; banked, so to speak, with Reinitz and Kleinpaul, who, you must admit, deposited it in a safe place. This money was then to be discovered as a genuine find. That's where you come in. Your lectures and your evidence would have guaranteed the *find* of the discovery. It would then have been the lawful property of Reinitz, and no man but himself and myself would have been the wiser if that rascal Kleinpaul had not been imported into the plot for political reasons only to spoil it. I do not know, myself, what his standing is in South America, but he must be a howling swell of some sort. Reinitz would never otherwise have stood his cheek, or his persecution of Marie. He came out in the *Argosy* as an officer of the ship, so that if we were boarded by an official for any purpose, legal or illegal, he would best escape observation that way. For the same reason Eugenie shipped as Marie's maid, in order that if any misadventure occurred there might be as little out of the common about our company as possible. Kleinpaul had to be kept safe by Marie; Marie could not well go without some girl, so her greatest friend came as her maid. It's a bit complicated, but there was a reason for everything."

"Why did they bring you into all this? Why not keep enough gold to finance the expedition themselves?"

"That is very simple. Their hands were

being forced—by Kleinpaul, I believe—and they could not get any considerable amount of money ready in the time. I met Reinitz in London. He had an introduction to me. The rest you know—the *Argosy*, Croaghaun, etc.

"How did Reinitz come to select me?" Whitmore asked, after a long pause.

"That's where I come in again," Mackenzie answered stolidly. He was extenuating nothing. "Reinitz asked me to suggest a man for his purpose. He had never heard of you in his life, but his description of the necessary qualifications fitted you to a hair. I suggested you. Circumstances did the rest. I excuse nothing. I justify nothing. Next to Kleinpaul, I consider that I am the villain of the piece. Reinitz is a visionary, but his motives were not unworthy. My motives were strictly sordid."

"These motives you ascribe to Reinitz—what are they?"

"The gold, as I told you, is money that has been drained from various South American States by a conspiracy of financiers, and entrusted to Reinitz. He is a man, as you know, who believes that the end justifies the means."

"I am well aware of that," Whitmore said bitterly.

"He has devoted his life to the realisation of a splendid dream—a dream which that gold was intended to aid in materialising."

Mackenzie stopped as if to take breath, and

MACKENZIE'S CONFESSION. 259

then cried with one of his old exuberant outbursts :

"The dream was the federation of the"—
he stopped again and struck an oratorical attitude—"the United States of South America!"

re—and
amount
initz in
e. The
n, etc."
me?"

' Mac-
tenuat-
ggest a
eard of
of the
a hair
ne rest.
Next
villain
ut his
motives

initz ;

y that
merican
e, and
as you
ustifies

re said

sation
a that
sing."
h, and

CHAPTER XXVI.

MAN PROPOSES—VARIOUSLY.

VERY little was added to Mackenzie's confession by Reinitz, further than a bribe and promise that he would justify himself to Whitmore at a more convenient season. The present was too full of plans and preparations for departure, or flight. Among many other matters which had been obscure, but were now made plain, was the enormous multitude of mules in the train. It had always seemed to Whitmore excessive for the transport of the small proportion of the more valuable curios which he had selected as suggestive specimens of El Dorado architecture and sculpture; as evidences of the more important epochs in the civilisation which had once flourished in this strange city of the plateau. Every transport mule that now left El Dorado was heavily laden; and the burthen of them all was gold.

The solid blocks of gold may have been melted from bars or coins, but they had been cast in such a form as to pass for very ancient manufacture. They were unlike anything in

modern currency, or usage ; a refinement, no doubt, of invention due to Reinitz, whose plan seemed to have been calculated to cover every possible contingency — except Kleinpaul. But all conspiracies are at the mercy of the conspirators. Happily, Kleinpaul's treachery had not yet borne evil fruit. But with the betrayed, it would be a race against time.

Convoy after convoy of mules were despatched, guarded by small parties of Dangan's command. The risk of loss on the way to the *Argosy* was not great. There were very few enemies to fear in the district, and the muleteers were unlikely to abscond, as they knew nothing of the value of their loads. Further, there was no road but that to the *Argosy* to escape by, even if they had discovered the nature of their merchandise. The work went briskly on.

* * * *

The last mules were loaded in the great square at Golgotha, and the remnant of Dangan's guard stood to their arms ready to mount for the last march. The vaults were empty of treasure, and the cavalcade only waited for the word of command. It was left to Reinitz to give this order, and, like the officer who is to take command of a party, he came last on parade. His grey hair and moustache had bleached absolutely white in the last few weeks, and his bearing was

less confident. The fire in his eyes still shone the unquenchable flame of the enthusiast who knows no fatigue short of exhaustion and no defeat but death. His daughter and her friend rode with him, keeping near him, plying him with unobtrusive little services, he worshipping him, as many women worship a man whose star has set—because it has set.

"You are quite ready, Mackenzie?" Reinitz asked gently.

"Yes, we are only waiting for you to give the word."

"Then pass it on to Dangan. He still enjoys drill, and does it well."

Dangan shouted the orders in a voice that spread over the whole square: an uneasy swaying motion, caused by want of spontaneity in the units, rippled over the cavalcade: it stumbled over itself, trampled on itself, cursed itself, kicked itself by the heels of its constituent mules: made friends with itself, tried again—and started!

In a very stately manner the procession ambled out of the great square of Golgotha. The clash of the tramping hoofs awoke sharper echoes in the narrower primeval thoroughfares through which they had then to pass. Presently the vanguard, formed of Dangan's carbineers or riflemen, were clear of the ruins, and soon after the last man had followed his leaders into the broad savannah which extended for many miles round. For some distance the road was good; trodden into

something in the similitude of a highway by the constant traffic which had recently passed over it, and the march proceeded rapidly.

When the cloud of dust from the feet of the tramping mules had shut out El Dorado—that weird, wonderful, exquisite, execrable, entrancing, and disgusting memorial of earliest man—Reinitz left the two girls, and urged his mule across the line of march to where Whitmore was riding gloomily by himself.

“You do not return my salute, Dr. Whitmore,” Reinitz said evenly, and without temper, reining his mule into stride with Whitmore’s. “You consider yourself aggrieved—and are aggrieved. But notwithstanding the completeness of the confession Mackenzie tells me he made, there are a few words which I wish to add, if you will permit me.”

“I will neither permit you, nor refuse you permission,” Whitmore said coldly.

“I cannot complain of that,” Reinitz agreed. “It is only just. I will go on then without your permission—which you do not refuse. A man of your wide information, and well-balanced mind, must admit that the agreeable and very general lamentation over the sins which suit our neighbours, and would not serve ourselves, is certainly hypocritical. It only accenuates the obvious fact that our system of ethics amounts to very little more than following the universal necessity of harmony with our environment, or the equally

irresistible destiny of fulfilling the bent of our own temperaments."

"Take me as denying both your premises if only for the sake of argument," Whitmore interrupted. "Suppose me to say that the highest forms of sentient life can create their own environment, and control their temperaments."

"It is a point on which we might argue for a long time—for the sake of argument, as you say—but that way lies futility. You admit, you cannot deny, that what is right and moral in one environment may become wrong and immoral in another."

"In the non-essentials—yes. In the eternal verities, truth, justice, and so on—no."

A block occurred far forward in the line which caused it to close up on itself like the carriages of a sharply arrested train. The confusion which ensued interrupted Reinitz, but he was determined to press his view home on Whitmore. The time might be near at hand when he would no longer have the opportunity of clearing himself of much which, he earnestly believed, was guilty or glorious according to the point of view from which it was regarded. When the tumult passed, and order was restored, the conversation was resumed.

"Everything is essential or non-essential, according to the temperament of the presiding judge," Reinitz then said, with some asperity. "But we'll pass that; what I wish to come

MAN PROPOSES—VARIOUSLY. 265

to is this: I have used you ill: I respect you as a man of honour, and I wish, as our roads in life, which have strangely enough converged, are very soon to diverge, I wish to stand better with you than I fear I do."

"To simplify," Whitmore put in, "I consider you an opportunist—nothing worse. Pardon me if I must add—nothing better."

"I wonder how much misery the opportunists have saved the world!" Reinitz protested.

"No man can ever calculate the legacy of misery the opportunists have left the world," Whitmore corrected.

"Well, well, we are on the esoteric plane again, and I wish to avoid that. What I have done has been done, so far as my lights have guided me, to lessen that legacy. It takes many wise men to undo the harm one good man can do."

"It takes countless multitudes of merely good men to undo the harm one brilliantly gifted genius who is without honour can do."

The long cavalcade stumbled on. The evening sun went down with a rush. The short twilight of the tropics passed as suddenly almost as a change of scene at a theatrical show. Before it gave place in turn to night, Reinitz, who had been silent for a time, said thoughtfully:

"It is hard for every man to know what is right. But if a man does what he thinks is

best, would your rigid code admit him to measure of salvation ? ”

“ My rigid code—so far as our particular difference goes—makes out Mackenzie, who frankly admits he is going for his own interest, a better man than you with all your sophistry. Mackenzie hardly knows the subtler forms of right and wrong, and frankly makes no pretence at observing them. You do know them, but when they interfere with your own purpose or ambition, you debate them away, and they disappear. Mackenzie is a simple savage. You are a sophisticated intriguer. I prefer Mackenzie. But I will call the game square with you if you will make this concession: your daughter has suffered enough in the furtherance of your splendid schemes—

“ My God ! ” Reinitz cried in bitter protest.

“ My schemes, like myself and you, are part and parcel of the evolution of civilisation. We cannot help ourselves.”

“ Well, let your daughter off now, and proceed with the evolution of the United States of South America without her, and bury my hatchet.”

“ So utterly unselfish and disinterested prayer, such a strictly impersonal request, Reinitz repeated still very bitterly, “ is only what I would expect from so rigid an altruist. I could not refuse it. I grant it at once.”

Reinitz rode off and left Whitmore not so easy in his own mind as to which of them had got the better of the argument. The subject

was really too difficult. He gave it up, and rode about in the ranks of the cavalcade looking for Marie. By the time he found her the gloaming had changed into night, but the march was pushed on, for the road at this portion of the journey was still good and safe, and it behoved the band to make speed while they could in order to have more time at command for the points of danger. The long cavalcade had now settled into its stride, and slung along at a good pace, harness creaking, hoofs pattering, a snatch of song here, a whip cracking there—altogether a homely feeling in its ranks that was enhanced by the dreary woodland sounds on either side. The savannah had ended and the forest had begun. Tree frogs croaked or boomed, and that villainous howling monkey at intervals lifted up his voice in the wilderness, with the lonesome effect of a single sheep bleating on a Scottish mountain or moor. Presently the great tropic moon came sailing up, and the line of horsemen shone with stars of fire flashing from every polished buckle in their harness; simultaneously, the white-faced stars above began to pale their glories; the strongest lost their lustre; the weakest flickered and went out.

"I have been searching for you a long time," Whitmore said, reining in alongside Marie, and joining her in the march. Eugenie and Mackenzie considerably fell back a few lengths. The break in the line did not

matter. There was plenty of room for it to scatter.

"I think I have some news for you which will give you pleasure," Whitmore continued as Marie had not spoken. She turned to him with the sudden look of anticipation of one to whom good news is rare. In the bright moon he could see the eager expression of her face as distinctly as in the light of day. He was glad to see it.

"Do you remember saying to me, as the *Argosy* was steaming away from the Irish coast, that your freedom as a cosmopolitan was sometimes a dreary privilege, that 'it must be rather nice to have a home?' Don't you remember that?"

"Yes, I remember it very well."

"I know better now than then what those words really meant. They meant that the atmosphere of intrigue and conspiracy in which your life has passed becomes oppressive — however noble the object which is being intrigued or conspired for?"

"Perhaps they did."

"I have obtained your father's promise to let you go free from this expedition and everything for which it works."

"Then I am free indeed," she said half-heartedly. "I have attained a comprehensive measure of independence. Practically, I have never had a home such as that of which you spoke. It seems as if I shall soon

have to dispense also with a father—as well as all my few friends.”

“Do you remember—try if you can remember—I know you had forgotten—the occasion when we once walked together this way.” He leant over and took her hand, interlacing their fingers.

“I suppose it was in that ridiculous episode on the moor at Inniskerry,” she answered. Her hand lay impassively in his. She did not try to remove it—or return his clasp.

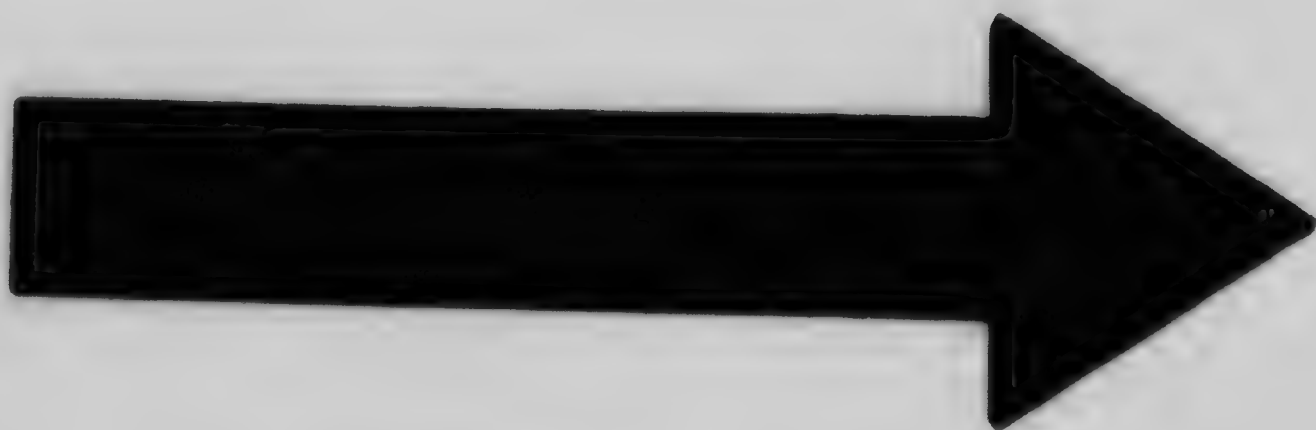
“Yes, we walked quite a long time that way. I wish to walk again with you that way: this time on a longer journey. Will you walk with me——”

“I am afraid we could not keep up with the procession,” she interrupted suddenly, turning his question into jest with nervous haste. He did not resent her interruption or the manner of it, although it upset his figure of speech.

“I was speaking metaphorically,” he resumed, trying to catch a look from her eyes. In the romantic moonlight, his big sombrero, dark complexion, picturesque dress, and the easy, graceful way he swung in his saddle gave him quite a gay, Spanish cavalier style. As Marie rode silently on, looking straight ahead, it is possible she had not observed this.

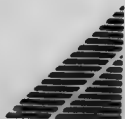
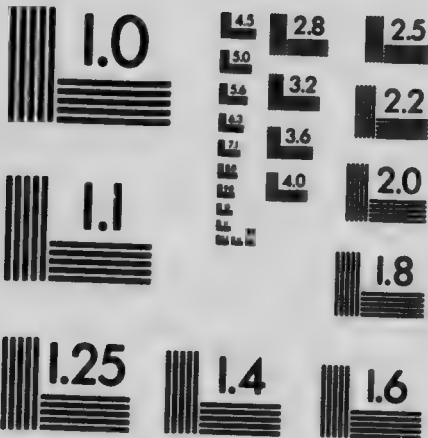
“You spoke of losing all your friends,” he persisted. “Did you count me out among the rest?”

“I presumed that when you returned to



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

London, and I returned to Barbados—I have lived there with the Meyers for some time—we should not meet with any frequency.”

“How are you going to shake me off when I hold you thus?”

“You will not hold me—thus—if I do not wish it.”

“You can unloose your fingers—if you wish.”

“But I can’t when you hold them so fast.”

“Do you wish?”

“I wonder what Mackenzie—”

“Do you wish?”

“What a beautiful moon—”

“You have not answered me.”

She raised their clasped hands level with her bridle hand, hesitated a moment, looked with a little nervous laugh in his face—then bent down and touched his hand with her lips.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RACE TO THE COAST.

THE last convoy from El Dorado passed safely across that dangerous piece of road in the great mountain gorge where the mules had been lost on the first journey. Here no night trekking, or moonlit sonatas of pretty sentiment, dare be attempted. The road, it is true, had served for the passage of many previous mule trains, but from its age no one knew when or where it might break down with disastrous results to those who happened to be on it at the point of danger. In the van, therefore, lay the post of honour, and toward it Mackenzie and Whitmore prepared to make their way when the pass was reached.

Two objections were raised against this movement—by the ladies of the party. The first was lodged by Eugenie, who put her plea to Mackenzie, and received a succinct reply :

“ I am not much of a coward in any way,” she remarked ; “ but I want you with me when we are crossing that place you bridged provisionally on the way out.”

"I am a bit of a coward in many ways," Mackenzie answered quite untruthfully, "but I want to see that the place is safe before you cross it. It seems to me that the best way to make sure of this is to cross it first myself."

"You're not as clever a man as your friend," she nodded toward Whitmore, who was explaining something very earnestly to Marie. "But you're as good a man. Anyhow you're the man for me," she added to herself, and Mackenzie rode off.

Marie proceeded more adroitly, although she commenced in almost the same words:

"I want you, please, to stay with me when we are crossing that dreadful place Mackenzie bridged so cleverly on the first journey. This dreadful beast of a mule has a mouth like—"

"I will get you another."

"No, no! They all have dreadful mouths, and I really can't manage them jointly or severally. You must see me past that dangerous bit."

"My duty requires me to see that that dangerous bit is safe before you cross it," Whitmore said gravely. His protest was identical in spirit with Mackenzie's, if rather better phrased.

"Then you leave me to cross by myself, so soon—so soon after—"

"Marie, listen to me. Mackenzie has ridden forward, although his girl—as you must have heard—interceded with him."

THE RACE TO THE COAST. 273

Would my girl—my girl," he repeated with endearing emphasis ; " would she wish me to be less of a man than he has proved ? I must go, Marie."

" You must," she said with a sudden flush. " Eugenie is a dear girl and a dear friend of mine, but my man "—she repeated the words softly, following his lead—" my man must not be less than hers. Go ! "

There would have seemed to a cynical critic almost a touch of theatricality in the girl's manner ; for, after all, the danger was not very immediate. Nevertheless, it was immediate enough to give her sincere distress, and she had not a thought of histrionic display in the manner she showed her feeling. Sincerity does not always shelter, ashamed to show its face, behind the commonplace. It is often there : but not always there.

When the cavalcade reached the highest point in the pass, Mackenzie ordered the main body to ride on to a broad plateau about a mile further down, where it could camp in safety and rest for the midday meal. The select party, consisting of his personal friends—who took power to add Tregellis to their number for this occasion—was halted on this commanding spot. Below them the mountain side fell sheer a thousand feet, but across the gorge the declivity was less precipitous. This great gorge afforded a splendid panorama of mountain and valley. It was a beautiful spot, well worth many an hour's climb to see,

and exquisitely suited for the *al fresco* meal Mackenzie had arranged. They sat down to it very well content and with excellent appetite. The glorious air sweeping through the cañon was a splendid stimulus, and the beauty of the scene below their very feet had an extraordinarily exhilarating effect. Even the gloom in which Reinitz seemed plunged was lifted, at least temporarily, and although it did not perhaps add anything to the general hilarity, he did not restrain it.

For a man whose fortunes were, he himself believed, ruined irretrievably, Mackenzie was certainly in wonderful spirits. Failing sufficient encouragement from the others, he plied Dangan and Tregellis with champagne, joining them with great good nature and the pleasantness of this picnic in the park was much enhanced by his rollicking humour. Finally, he prevailed on Whitmore to join him in singing "Excelsior," and the duet went very well. They had both fair voices, and, while Mackenzie put too much power into his part, the result was excellent. An appropriate setting does much for any artist's effect, and on this occasion the surroundings were in singular harmony with some of the lines of the song. "'Try not the pass,' the old man said," was specially emphasised by way of reference to the warnings which the girls had vainly given. But the tempest which lowers darkly overhead in the song, had to be left wholly to the

imagination, for here the sky overhead was unspecked blue.

The applause which followed was hearty considering the limited audience, but the continuity of interest was broken by Tregellis, who took advantage of its conclusion to remark sententiously :

"I was never one as did hold by these teetotal wines. But this is good—if there was enough of it."

"That's not a teetotal wine," Mackenzie reassured him. "That's about as intoxicating a wine as ever was bottled."

"I hadn't observed it," Tregellis remarked plaintively. He had certainly had enough to enable him to perceive it if the wine really possessed the quality claimed. Dangan was also of opinion that there was very little body in it. Otherwise it was excellent—most excellent.

This light-hearted interlude lasted no longer than the time necessary to rest the transport animals. When their time of allowance had elapsed, Reinitz again urged the anxious column on the march at its utmost speed consistent with safety. His previous convoys had all of them presumably reached the *Argosy* safely. It would be hard if the last one should be late; that is, if the *Argosy* should be so long delayed that a warship would be waiting for her in the estuary of the river when she reached the sea. This was what Reinitz feared, and to get there before the

ship he felt sure Kleinpaul's information would immediately despatch, he strained every nerve. It was useless to drive the animals any faster than they could go alive to reach their journey's end. How fast they could go and reach it alive was a point tested with great exactness. Some of them indeed died under the test, and that spared the remainder in pace, if it increased the burthen they had to bear. For those who were left must divide amongst them the load of those which fell. This merchandise was too precious to be jetsoned.

Mackenzie worked like a demon, driving on the cavalcade in spite of every physical obstacle it encountered. The skin was shredded from his face; the heavy sweat and that sickening temperature was never dropped upon him, but he never flinched. Whitmore worked hard, too, but this was where Mackenzie, as he himself would put it, came in. It needed a man of a tempestuous temperament to drive the fainting men to flog the dying mules on. The work was utterly brutal. It wanted no high collegiate qualifications; no large academic knowledge; not even the highest form of courage. What was wanted was precisely what he claimed to supply—plain brute force and ignorance of the more tender susceptibilities. Reinhardt could not do this work himself, but he was always at Mackenzie's elbow, firing his already ferocious enthusiasm. Every yard a dyin

THE RACE TO THE COAST. 277

beast could be made to march was a yard less for his fellows to carry his load when he fell in his tracks—to feast the forest harpies. The torment of insects, the ceaseless, exasperating buzz of moths, the accursed heat—it was terrible. A timid man would have given in. A timid man would never have been there. But Alexander Mackenzie did not come from a timid stock—or a timid race. He swore tumultuously; but he was forgiven without demur. Grumble and go makes a good soldier, they say; but grumble and squat makes for the savage. Mackenzie swore riotously—and went.

After many days of hardships a volley from Dangan's advance guard gave the welcome news that they had sighted the *Argosy*. This signal had been arranged to cheer the dead-beat men and animals with the earliest intelligence of that welcome sight. A quiver of relief shuddered all along the line; a faint cheer answered the volley; whips cracked; two or three mules dropped dead, but the remainder mended their pace in a last, and for many of them a dying, spurt. Meyer was on the bridge, and he had his whistle going, and a few heavier guns, than most knew were on board, fired in welcome. The scene was animated to an almost hysterical degree. Congratulations were exchanged, and enthusiastic greetings passed between the long lost expedition and the officers of the ship, all of whom were nearly mad with the dread-

ful monotony of the life they had been living since the *Argosy* cast anchor there. Transportation of the gold and the personal effects of the returned party went on meanwhile at furious speed. Meyer had been warned by an advance courier, and had been lying with steam for full speed ready. But night was on them before the last block of metal was aboard, and there was nothing to be done but to wait with what patience they could command for the first streak of daylight.

When the course of the river could be discerned in the first of the dawn the anchors were got in, and the *Argosy* went down the stream at full speed. The fine swinging current increased the vessel's speed to a tremendous rush, and the river banks were flying past like the hedges from the window of an express train. Some of the windings of the river seemed dangerously sharp for a vessel of the *Argosy's* length, but Meyer paced his bridge complacently and declared that unless the island they uprooted had suddenly drifted across from bank to bank, nothing should stop him. His reception of the news of Kleinpaul's desertion was puzzling. In one respect he seemed to take it very coolly. But he certainly did all that a man could do to get the *Argosy* to sea in the shortest possible time. Mackenzie's mantle of command had passed on to him. He wore it worthily.

"We must be there before the Brazilian warship," he answered in reply to every-

question or suggestion on the rate at which he was driving the ship.

"I really think, Meyer," Mackenzie himself ventured at one sharp twist in the river's course, "you should stop at this one and swing on one of your anchors or something. If you so much as touch anything at this pace you may get up the cry 'any more for the shore!' as soon as you like."

"We must be at sea before the Brazilian ship, I said."

"I know you did," Mackenzie admitted irritably. "But it seems to me that unless you change your tactics you'll never be at sea in the *Argosy* again."

"I will be at sea again, and in the *Argosy*. And I *will* be there before the Brazilian ship. You took the gold to the ship, and did it like a man. I am taking it to the sea. This is my department." Meyer said this with a snap which closed the conversation. His expression as he spoke was not very agreeable, but they made allowance for that. He had been on the bridge for many hours at the time, and showed no intention of leaving it immediately.

So the *Argosy* surged down stream, a strange apparition in that primeval region; steaming along, storming along at tremendous speed: terrifying the unsophisticated forest life; churning up great waves of coffee-coloured water in her wake; dashing the brown foam from her bows; playing her part well in the race against time.

Meyer kept his word. He got his vessel to sea before the Brazilian warship, which was hastily despatched to intercept her; not by much. When the *Argosy* at last left the swing of the ocean under her, and the low-lying, swampy coast was sinking on the horizon, Meyer crawled down from his bridge. He was really in a critical state of prostration, but his indomitable spirit sustained him. His eyes were shining with his triumph, as he let Mackenzie and Whitmore partly carry him to the saloon, where Marie and Eugene were waiting to coo over him, and pet him and praise him to his face as he deserved. When Mackenzie pushed a brimming glass of champagne into his hand, he held it up and cried with very pardonable exultation:

"I said I would get the *Argosy* to sea before the Brazilian ship."

"You did, my son," Mackenzie interrupted with a roar, giving Meyer one of his congratulatory slaps on the back, which would not be good for a man wearing false teeth. "You said it a hundred times."

"And I have done it," Meyer added. He spoke too soon.

his vessel
p, which
her; but
last had
and the
g on the
s bridge.
stration,
ed him.
h, as he
y carry
Eugenie
et him,
eserved.
glass of
up and
before
rupted
is con-
would
teeth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CLOSE CALL.

THE *Argosy* was ploughing peacefully her lonely furrow on the sea; all were below, and most asleep, except the officers and men on duty, for the day had not yet come, although about to arrive. A grey light began to strengthen in the east; the dark water looked less sombre; then the command "Let there be light!" and the obedient sun leaped up. As the light came, the bang of a heavy gun startled all on board; a solid shot came skipping across the *Argosy's* bows; and not more than half a mile off, on the starboard bow, lay a battleship with the smoke of the gun still streaming from its muzzle, and the flag of Brazil flying aft.

"This complicates," was all Meyer said when his friends hurried up to the bridge as fast as they could dress. There could, of course, only be one answer to the summons and the signal which had been flown by the Brazilian ship. The *Argosy* was practically lying to, with only enough steam to keep steerage way on her, and so prevent her head

falling away to leave her rolling in a bear sea. A boat was put off by the warship, and it had nearly covered the distance between the vessels, when the muster took place on the bridge. Dangan was the only absentee. Meyer explained that he had despatched him on a special duty. What the duty was he did not say.

"It's all up now, I suppose?" Mackenzie asked in a hopeless voice. Reinitz stood near but did not speak. He seemed completely dazed. Indeed he was spoken to several times by Marie, but he paid no attention to her. In reply to Mackenzie, Meyer said quietly, so that the girls might not hear.

"I would not say it is all up, but it will be a close call. We may pull it off yet. I did my best to avoid this mischance, and I have done my best to provide against it. I thought we had slipped past. The brute, of course, showed no lights—but neither did I, so need not say anything. It was a pure fluke his lying in my course—but here's the boat!"

A bo'swain's whistle sounded, and the petty officers lined up at the gangway to receive the visitors who came on their own invitation and that not specially polite. A naval officer with a small guard came up the gangway. With the officer was a man in civilian dress. It was no surprise to anyone when he stepped on deck and revealed himself—Mr. Kleinpaul—at their service.

The Brazilian officer was courteously, and Kleinpaul cordially, received by Captain Meyer, who in honour of his visitors had changed his jacket and cap, when passing his room, for others in which the gold braid and buttons were, if possible, still more resplendent. The officer stated his business very briefly, and explained that, as he spoke English with difficulty, Mr. Kleinpaul had been deputed to accompany him, and empowered to amplify whatever points were obscure. Kleinpaul bowed and confirmed the officer's statement, but before he proceeded to business, he could not deny himself the unofficial privilege of a few personal words with his friend Meyer, from whom, alas! he had so long been unhappily separated. Meyer betrayed no less warmth, and professed, in turn, to have felt the separation as keenly as Kleinpaul himself. There was a considerable savour of "My excellent friend Bombados!" "My dearest and best Pataquay!" about the interview, but that was in their way, and it was not likely that fixed mannerisms would be departed from on so ceremonious an occasion.

Reinitz watched these essays in punctilio with a stony face, from which all expression had vanished. Mackenzie was in open despair, and even Whitmore, who usually maintained a firmer control of his feelings, showed scarcely less anxiety, although he had not, like Mackenzie, the slightest hope of any

direct pecuniary advantage from the escape of the *Argosy*, and therefore, no great loss to fear from her capture. The intrepid girl who had passed through much where many a man would have flinched, had both apparently made up their minds for the worst. Marie was the more completely dismayed, and when Whitmore moved over to her, she could not hide her white face or the painful heaving of her bosom from him. She tried to speak, but the words choked on her dry lips, and she did not persist.

"And now, my dear Kleinpaul, to come to business — tiresome necessity," Meyer said urbanely. "To what are we indebted for this visit, made, I might say, with all the honours of war?" He bowed in the direction of the officer, who stood apart while they talked, and continued: "Your friend was slightly indefinite, not to say hazy."

"To offer you terms—my dear Meyer," Kleinpaul explained with a deprecating wave of his hand to express the unbounded chagrin he suffered in the awkward position he had been forced to take.

"A little plainer, please." (It is unnecessary to continue their "My dear Meyer;" "My dear Kleinpaul"). What precisely do you mean?"

"I mean, precisely, terms of surrender."

"To whom?"

"To the Government of Brazil." He

noded toward the battleship which lay so near that they could see the men at their stations and the guns trained on the *Argosy*. "Whose ship," he continued, "will fire on you, and sink you at the first broadside, the moment I return, if I return without your surrender."

"Ah but—pardon the hypothesis—if you do not return?"

"They will open fire if I am not over the side of this ship in ten minutes from the moment I stepped on board. I should say that about half of that limited period is up already. So, if you do not give me my answer immediately, we shall go to the bottom together. For my part," he added, with a villainous smile, or leer, "I could not wish to sink in more excellent company than that of my friend and physician—or surgeon—Dr. Whitmore."

There was a stir on board the battleship. The little dots representing men moved a little this way, that way. There could be no doubting Kleinpaul. If they detained him he would go down himself in order that they should accompany him. He had pluck enough and spite enough to do it.

"What terms do you offer?"

"Confiscation of the gold you are carrying, which is the property of the Government of Brazil."

"It is not the property of the Government of Brazil, or any other Government. It is my

property!" Reinitz was interrupting, when Meyer fiercely cut him short:

"The lives of my passengers and crew are a paramount responsibility to the safe transport of your property, sir. If you interfere again, I will have you put under arrest."

"No interference," Kleinpaul resumed "with yourself, your ship, your passengers and crew—all save the man Max Reinitz and his daughter Marie, who return with me as State prisoners."

Here Whitmore stepped forward, but before he could speak, Meyer snapped: "You utter a word I will place you also under arrest." Their hearts sank at this. Meyer, they knew, held in his hands whatever possibility of the game was left. And it was too evident he was standing in with Kleinpaul. The game then was lost. But they picked up heart again, or held their judgment when the captain of the *Argosy* spoke again:

"No!" he said pleasantly to Kleinpaul. "They do not return with you. We'll waive that point and discuss the rest."

"We will not waive that point. I mentioned it last—er—inadvertently. But it really comes first. Until it is arranged, the rest does not apply."

During this significant conversation the two ships were forging slowly ahead, marching, as it were, strictly in step, neither gaining on the other. The tropic day was tempered

by a pleasant head wind which cooled the atmosphere delightfully. In the strong sunlight which still fell aslant the wave-crests, for the day was not yet an hour old, the sea sparkled with splendid brilliance. The battleship, rising in stately ease over the rolling swells, was an impressive picture of strength—of reserved power. Everything was cast in the superlative degree of beauty—save the matter between those two gentlemen on the *Argosy*, who discussed their difference in so very well-bred a fashion.

Meyer did not speak for a minute, and during this silence every heart beat hard. At length he said very quietly :

"Then consider your conditions refused—and quit my ship."

There was murmur of painful expectancy. None there knew how soon after this the guns of the battleship would open fire.

"You refuse my terms?" Kleinpaul snarled, "and compel me to return—"

"I refuse your terms, but I do not compel you to return. On the contrary—" Meyer strode over to the emissary of the Government of Brazil. The little captain never looked more dapper or debonair, save for the fierce light in his blazing eyes. Kleinpaul stood coldly insolent—scowling, perhaps. "On the contrary," Meyer said, still preserving his even tone, "if you are on board this ship one minute longer, I will compel you to remain."

" Captain Meyer, you are trifling with us," the Brazilian officer protested with dignity and in better English than he had claimed. " Mr. Kleinpaul is a naturalised citizen of Brazil ; you will not, pardon me, detain him while he is under my protection."

" You are in error, sir, in supposing that I shall permit myself to be dictated to by you personally. As for your Government, it can settle the matter with my Government. My ship will sail under the British flag. My ship is a registered cruiser."

" Poof ! my dear sir," the officer replied, not without point, " my ship is an armoured cruiser."

There was another of those heart-straining moments, when the officer said sharply :

" I must do my duty, and arrest my prisoners. You will not, I presume, resist me ? "

" I will resist you," Meyer answered shortly.

" By force ? " The officer asked. Meyer made a sign, and his men stood to attention.

" Dangan, stand by ! " Meyer called in a louder but perfectly calm tone. Another order was given in Dangan's voice, and fifty riflemen, with Tregellis in charge, leaped like stage demons on the deck, from the companion near which the parley was taking place, and lined up opposite the foreigners. Dangan himself stepped in front, and there surely was one of the moments in this real life of a gentle old gentleman's life. His kindly face

was stern and steady. Discipline had recovered all her own. He said quietly :

" Tregellis, take the officer yourself."

Then in a sonorous voice came :

" Ready—Present ! "

" By force ! " said Meyer to the officer.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WOMAN *versus* WINE.

THE orders of the Brazilian officer had not provided for this development, and he was completely taken by surprise. Kleinpaul, of course, knew of Dangan's riflemen, but he had not imagined that Meyer would be so mad as to resist even the smallest party which might be sent to board his vessel, when such a terribly superior force lay close at hand. Nevertheless, the thing had been done, and there was nothing left to the invaders but to get over the side as quickly as possible, and report to the commander of the battleship. Kleinpaul followed the officer and his guard down the gangway, looking his part to perfection. They were glad to see him off. The strain had been relieved for a moment, but who could tell how long the respite would last?

As soon as the Brazilian boat cast off, Meyer telegraphed to his engine-room "Slow ahead!" and the *Argosy* began to move through the water. The distance to the warship was not great, so that her boat must

necessarily be back with Meyer's defiance long before the two vessels were sufficiently widely separated for safety, even if the *Argosy* were going full speed. The relief was, therefore, only momentary, and the excitement again became painful when the boat was hauled up, and the men in her stepped on board the battleship. Slipping slowly through the water, the *Argosy* was still so near that no gunner, however inexperienced, could miss—unless he tried.

They were not long left in doubt. There was immediately a flash, a stream of smoke, and another heavy report, such as had startled the people on the *Argosy* at day-break. Another shot came tripping across the *Argosy's* bows close enough to be serious. Not many yards closer, and the shot would have crashed through her hull like paper. An inarticulate chorus passed from bow to stern. That long-drawn sigh "Oh!" told better than the loudest lamentation how deeply the ship's company was moved. And it surely was unreasonable that the captain of a vessel like the *Argosy* should be for one moment contumacious when he had received orders from a ship such as that which was now training a six-inch gun on his hull amidships. Meyer glanced at the distance between the ships. He did not delay on the calculation, for there was no time to lose. The next shot would send the *Argosy* to the bottom. He made a sign, and the man at the signal

haliards ran up a short message to the warship to prepare them for the answer to the summons. Meyer did this to ensure that the enemy would rightly read his answer. When the signal was flying, he gave an order to one of his officers who appeared to be on some special duty on the bridge. The officer touched his cap, and turning smartly on his heel, did something to the end of a flexible tube he had been watching with rigid care. The effect was extraordinary.

Right in front of the warship a tremendous waterspout was vomited from the ocean. It rose in a gorgeous, sun-gilt cloud, the greater portion of it fell again in a snowy cascade while a soft vapour drifted away to leeward making miniature rainbows as it passed. Close to the warship, the men falling about, quite unprepared as they were, proved that shock must have felt the shock severely, even if far enough away from the explosion to be safe from grave injury.

Again Meyer made a sign, and the signal officer began a series of complex combinations, a free translation of which would read thus :-

"That was a steerable torpedo. I have another this moment under your keel. If you fire so much as a pistol again I will blow your vessel out of the water."

Frantic signalling began on the warship in answer to this pointed message. The captain of the *Argosy* was begged to discontinue hostilities, and go on his way rejoicing,

otherwise, so long as he went. Lest you should accuse the commander of the warship of pusillanimous conduct, you are reminded that if the commander in question had dared to forestall Meyer's next torpedo—which may have existed in fact or in the imagination of the captain of the *Argosy* for all he knew—his action could only have resulted in sinking fifty millions of gold a thousand fathoms deep. It was to get this gold, not sink it at sea, he had been delegated. Be sure Meyer counted on this. The commander of the battleship counted on a settlement with Meyer later. And he would have settled with him—and settled him—only that the *Argosy* was so fast a ship.

Some further amenities were interchanged, and then, having conveyed to the Brazilian captain that he was to go due south while the *Argosy* went due north, Meyer put his vessel to full speed, and before long the battleship was hull down on the horizon, only marked on the long line of blue by a little smoke cloud which hung low on the horizon.

"Well, upon my soul!" Mackenzie said after a long silence. The remark hardly did justice to the occasion, but he did not add to it. Dangan's contribution to the subject was equally brief, but more appropriate.

"Most capable, man, Meyer—most capable!"

An unspoken "Amen" was breathed in assent to that summary, and no more was

said. The crisis had been so acute they did not care to discuss it casually. And they were all serious enough already without willfully adding to the gloom which was weighing over them, notwithstanding their escape. They had gone free so far, but doom was in the air. The question could only be "how long?" It was a break on the tension when, after a long day on deck, the dinner bell—homely note!—sounded and they all filed below. Great preparations had been made in the saloon. Improvised decorations had been scattered about. The table was laid with a sumptuousness not hitherto attempted, and the feast was worthy of the occasion. Several of the ship's officers—that curious class of men who had kept themselves so much apart, so completely outside the expedition proper—joined the company in the saloon. Without conforming altogether to the requirements—or limitations—of full evening dress, the two girls made a very good appearance in cool, white gowns with little blossoms of colour contributed by a dainty ribbon or the like. The men, too, managed to furbish up. It was felt that the circumstances not only justified but required a little extra display, and the best was done with the materials available.

The dinner went off well. Everyone was either in high or hysterical spirits. The rebound from the gloom of the day was in its zenith. No one, of course, knew what the

next day might bring forth, but it could not really be worse than the day they had passed, and most likely would be better. Meantime, the present sufficed them. After the ladies retired, the bottle passed freely with some of the party, and at a late hour Mackenzie rose to his feet. He proposed Meyer's health with great enthusiasm, and sat down, with all the emphasis of a fifteen stone man, some distance away from his seat.

Meyer was clearly tired, but the younger officers were enjoying the night, and they had had a wretched time lying so long at anchor in that Guiana river. He felt that he owed it to them to let them have a moderate fling, and in this he could see that Whitmore and Reinitz sympathised, although the entertainment was quite out of their way. He rose therefore, in answer to Mackenzie's challenge, and made a very neat little speech, in which he congratulated the whole company on their escape from inconvenient possibilities, and Reinitz, in particular, whose arrest had been so peremptorily prevented. He spoke pleasantly and well, but notwithstanding the jocular tone in which most of his remarks were made, there was evidently more feeling behind them than that to which the speaker was pretending. He said that very soon—probably on the next day, if nothing unforeseen occurred—he would be able to land all his English passengers in Barbados. He could not, for reasons which were sufficiently ob-

vious, bring the *Argosy* in sight of the island but the large launch would take them in safety across the Atlantic almost, if necessary. They would, therefore, have no trouble in reaching the shore from the point where he would leave them. Those who were to be thus marooned, had foreseen something of the nature of what was in store for them, but, notwithstanding all the hardships and dangers of the expedition, it was a shock to them to learn the end was so near. It had proved arduous beyond expectation, but—in many ways—interesting beyond belief. It was over now, and they were sorry for it.

In his concluding remarks, Meyer addressed a few personal words to each in turn, and this broke the ominous silence in which they had all received his explanation. To Dangan he said :

"Captain Dangan, I drink your health." He raised his glass, and Dangan did the same. "I could not wish for a better shipmate."

"I have always said you were a most gallant commander—most gallant," Dangan replied heartily.

"Dr. Whitmore, I also wish to say a word to you. Your disappointment must, I know, be great at this termination to our enterprise. You did your share well, I understand, and if it had not been for Kleinpaul's treachery, I am sure your reward would have been great. But even as affairs have gone, you have much interesting matter that will make your name

honourably known. And I see no reason why you should not return to El Dorado with another expedition fitted out by the British Government and remove those memorials which we hoped to ship for you."

Dr. Whitmore said a word of acknowledgment, and then Meyer went on.

"Mr. Mackenzie," Meyer said quite in jest. "You are the most unfortunate of all. Dr. Whitmore has gained in knowledge what he has lost in time. But you have lost both time and money. I have a difficulty in offering you a proper amende——"

"By God! I should think you have a difficulty in offering any sort of an amende," Mackenzie cried furiously, springing to his feet and bringing down his fist with a crash on the table. Meyer was really going on to say, when interrupted, that no matter what Mackenzie gained in cash from the expedition, the immense value of his time on 'Change would far outbalance it. But what he did say was peculiarly unfortunate, for Mackenzie had formed a pessimistic estimate of his financial position, and the chance he ran of losing all he had invested in the enterprise. Besides, he had taken far too much champagne. In consequence he mistook Meyer's statement for a flat repudiation of his whole claim.

Meyer hastened to explain, but Mackenzie went on with a rush. "You need not say another word, Captain Karl Meyer. I wasn't

strictly square in this matter myself, so I am not going to call you names or"—he looked at Renitz—"that able conspirator who has humbugged us all so beautifully. I won't say more than that there should at least be honour among thieves."

"Sir!" Meyer cried.

"Hold on a minute!" Mackenzie shouted. "You have had your say, and I am going to have mine. Furthermore, I don't believe you are now, or ever have been, more than accessory. The whole honour and glory belongs to Reinitz. It was he who fooled me, and through me fooled Whitmore. His scheme was simply perfect. There has been positively no duplicity or fraud left out by him that I can think of. But I must admit that you, Meyer, played that farce with Kleinpaul and the Brazilian officer with very considerable skill. Your acting was splendid. And your plans were very fine. That mine—exploded by the warship herself——"

"That mine was exploded by me."

"And Dangan's riflemen, with blank cartridge."

"My men had ball cartridge, sir," Dangan said, with an angry flush. "I served it out myself, and saw them load with it."

"All," cried Mackenzie, without paying the slightest attention to the interruptions, "was calculated to deceive anyone but an expert. And I can't but admire the whole job as the best possible, the only possible,

way of getting clean away with the *whole* swag, of bringing the whole swindle—"

"Sir," Meyer interrupted quietly, but with a set face. "Remember you are still on my ship."

"Sir," Mackenzie flushed back undaunted. "Remember you are still on board my ship. She would be yours if you had paid for her, but you haven't. Meantime, she is mine, and I do not mean to sell. You may as well add piracy on the high seas to your comprehensive *repertoire*."

While Mackenzie was speaking, Reinitz sat absolutely silent. He did not try to interrupt, but the look of withering contempt on his face would have stopped a less headstrong man better than words. Whitmore did not try to stop Mackenzie either, simply because he knew that intervention would only make him more obstinate. The junior officers of the ship had long since learned enough English from their passengers to know that a serious breach had taken place, although they could not follow Mackenzie's torrential outburst. The situation was therefore extremely painful when the saloon door was furtively opened, and someone standing on its threshold made an imperious gesture to Mackenzie. He nodded determinedly, to signify dissent, and planted himself firmly on his chair as if, fearing his own resolution, he would hold on by it. He also kept his face rigidly away from the door—for quite ten seconds. Then he turned

and frowned again in that direction, growled an inarticulate refusal, rose slowly, and left the room.

"Most extraordinary, the hold that girl Eugenie has over him," Dangan whispered. "Most extraordinary. For some time he has been completely under her influence."

"Just now he is completely under the influence of drink," Whitmore replied angrily.

CHAPTER XXX.

SETTLING DAY.

"I AM sorry and ashamed for what I said last night, Meyer. Are you man enough to forgive me? I don't say that everyone would do it. I only ask you, are you man enough to do it?"

Mackenzie's repentance was too sincere to be suspected, and his apology was made with an appeal that was hard to resist. As he was speaking, Meyer's weather-beaten face relaxed from the expression it wore when Mackenzie came on the bridge. The crow's-feet under his eyes seemed to smooth away. The eyes, too, softened. His voice was not unkind as he replied :

"The truth is, Mackenzie, you don't deserve to be forgiven——"

"Of course I don't," Mackenzie interposed. "If I did you wouldn't deserve any credit for doing it. I am not insisting on a right. I am begging a favour."

"Well, I don't see how I can refuse, when you put it in that way," Meyer said, with a smile; "especially when we are so soon to part, and so unlikely to meet again."

He spoke to an officer who seemed to be waiting for an order. The officer left the bridge immediately on receiving his instructions, and soon after he was gone Mackenzie noticed men getting ready the large launch which was to take them ashore. The low coast of Barbados was still below the horizon, but Meyer did not intend to go much closer in lest a British warship might be waiting to interview him—they could not judge how far Kleinpaul's treachery had extended—and the British captain might not be so easily dealt with as the Brazilian. As the boat was being pushed out on the davits, Meyer said shortly:

"That's for you."

"And for your sister Eugenie," Mackenzie added.

"Yes, she has told me," Meyer said. "I hope you will be careful of her happiness."

The men parted friends. Mackenzie was too good a fellow to bear spite against a man simply because he himself was in the wrong, and Meyer had easily forgiven what he knew was not really meant. A group was coming towards the bridge. Whitmore and Reinitz were in front, talking earnestly, and Marie followed with Eugenie. On sight of this party, Meyer's tanned face went grey, and a partly smothered exclamation of pain escaped him.

As they came along the deck, Reinitz said, continuing a subject which had engaged them for a long time that morning:

"I now wish to ask you, when you have accepted my explanation so candidly, in thrusting my daughter upon you, have I wronged you beyond what a month or two will cure? Why stand upon conventionalities in such a case? Is your peace of mind seriously disturbed?"

"I do not intend that my peace of mind shall be disturbed unless your daughter refuses to come with me, and leave you to work out alone these vast ambitions by which you are possessed. It is for her to choose. Give her freedom of choice."

"Marie, a moment, please!" Reinitz said, turning to his daughter. She left her friend and came over to them. "This man asks you to choose between him and me. I only wish for your happiness. With me your life will be—as it has been—full of danger. With him, I know it will be safe. Choose, therefore, the way your own heart desires."

Marie turned pale and then very red, but she did not hesitate over her answer: "You know whether I would willingly desert you because there might be danger in following you. You know that the danger makes it harder to leave you. But I cannot alter my fate. I must go with him."

"You will tell Meyer this?"

"Karl knows," Marie answered, turning away her face.

They went to the bridge, and Meyer met them with a troubled face, which for once he

could not control. His debonair manner had failed him at last. He could only make a poor pretence at his imperturbable style. The effort it cost him was very obvious. Reinitz and Whitmore paused so that Marie might go forward alone and say farewell. They also found some object ten miles away which they examined with an exactitude that quite took their attention from the bridge until the girls rejoined them. She did not keep them long. Marie had previously told her story, and made her peace with the man she had been long engaged to. He had agreed to resign her, for her own happiness, with a touch of nobility that was not without its pathos. She could not speak for a moment when she went up to him, not did he seem anxious to hasten the last words. Then she steadied her voice and said softly :

"Karl—, if you would only hate me it would be easier—I would not feel so ungrateful—so wicked."

"Do not blame yourself for that which is beyond us all—our destiny, and don't worry about me. I have still my duty. God guard you." He kissed her on the forehead calmly and she went away sobbing in a heart-breaking way.

Whitmore came forward, and Meyer bade him courteous adieu. They exchanged a few friendly words, and as they shook hands Meyer said with a wan smile :

"I am cast for the heavy-father part to

day, it seems. I have just given my sister and your friend Mackenzie my blessing, and warned him that I will hold him accountable for Eugenie's happiness, and now Marie and you come along. I suppose I must bless you also. Be good to Marie. She has had a hard life. Good-bye ! ”

When the hour of parting has come, the less time lost over it the better. The *Argosy* was slowed down, stopped, and the boat which was to take them to land was immediately slung out, and lowered into the water. Many apparently heavy boxes were put into her. The men who handled these seemed to have been warned to use caution. They passed them along very gingerly. The contents of these boxes were really very valuable. Mackenzie drew Whitmore's attention, and said penitently :

“ There goes my freight after all I said last night. They have settled up to the last pound. We are going ashore practically in gold ballast. It is the biggest settling day I've ever had.”

“ It's a sort of settling day for us all,” Whitmore replied in a low voice.

They had some difficulty in getting into the launch, for there was a big, rolling sea on, and the boat rose and fell upon it so that it needed a smart jump from the gangway to make it safely. Tregellis was in charge of the small crew which Meyer had detailed to take the launch to the island, and Mackenzie naturally

took his place at the tiller. It was like old times to feel the swing of the tiller in his hand. He made Eugenie a comfortable seat near him, and when the others had got on board he cast off. As soon as he was clear of the *Argosy's* long hull he put the launch on the course Meyer had given him to hold until he got Mount Hillaby above the horizon, where a fresh one could be set for Needham Point and Carlisle Bay. In a couple of minutes the last salutes were due.

Meyer was on the bridge. The light was strong on his deep-lined face. They could see him plainly as he leaned on the rail and looked after them. Marie and Whitmore stood up in the launch and signalled their last farewell. The girl could not keep back a sob as she waved her handkerchief. Whitmore raised his cap. Meyer stood motionless watching them. Then he, too, raised his cap and waved it in answer to their salute. At the distance, he again looked as debonair as ever, but an officer on the bridge saw his lip twitch and heard the hiss of a quick breath drawn through his clenched teeth. He waved his cap again and turning sharply to his telegraphs, rammed the handle down to "full speed."

The great vessel began to forge ahead, and presently the wash tumbling over the rolling waves rocked the launch so that they had to steady themselves in order to stand. They could still see the erect figure on the bridge

and they watched it till the ship was foaming along at full speed. He never looked back, but stood stiffly like a soldier "to attention," eyes front—looking ahead. Before long the *Argosy* was an indistinct patch low in the blue, and even that was soon lost in the waste of water.

"Here ends my life—as it has been," Marie said in a low voice to Whitmore.

"And here begins your life as it is to be—brighter, better, if my care can make it so," he answered, earnestly.

"He said I was to be careful of your happiness," Mackenzie whispered to Eugenie, "and that he was glad old Dangan was going with us as a sort of chaperon for you two girls. But it's my opinion you, at least, are very competent to take care of yourself—and me too." There was a lugubrious note of surrender in this that called forth a smart reply. In return Mackenzie shrugged his broad shoulders and continued:

"All right, all right; you will bully me unmercifully. I know it, but I'm not sorry. It will be best so."

"Most capable man," old Dangan muttered disconsolately. He had taken the two girls, metaphorically, under his wings, and was delightfully fussy over them, and eloquent as to how welcome Mrs. Dangan (most capable woman!) would make them—and their families, he was inept enough to add—at the Sanatorium, where he hoped to see them all

before long. But his affection and admiration for Meyer was sincere and deep, and so he went on muttering, "very capable man—most capable."

* * *

That is the story of the discovery of a real El Dorado in South America long after the efforts of all previous expeditions had been proved vain. If Reinitz can succeed in hiding his gold till the time is ripe, then, when that time comes, a new federation will probably be added to the list of the nations of the earth—a new step taken on the way to the federation of the world. But for this story, no man would know by whom or how that new nationality had been financed. Its name will be :

"THE UNITED STATES OF SOUTH AMERICA."

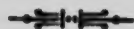
THE END.

2/- COPYRIGHT NOVELS—continued.

- 20 **The Right Sort.** By Mrs. E. KENNARD. Illustrated by EDGAR GIBBERNE.
- 21 **Beacon Fires.** By HEADON HILL. Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood
- 22 **Fordham's Fend.** By BERTRAM MITFORD. Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD.
- 23 **The Dwarf's Chamber.** By FERGUS HUME. Illustrated by PERCY F. S. SPENCE.
- 24 **The Voyage of the "Pulo Way."** By W. CARLTON DAWK. Illustrated by J. AMBROSE WALTON.
- 25 **Lord Edward Fitzgerald.** By M. McDONNELL BODKIN. Illustrated by LEONARD LINSDELL.
- 26 **The Unseen Hand.** By LAWRENCE L. LYNCH. Illustrated by ST. CLAIR SIMMONS.
- 27 **The Crime of a Christmas Toy.** By HENRY HERMAN. Illustrated by GEORGE HUTCHINSON.
- 28 **The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings.** By Mrs. L. T. MEADE. Illustrated by SIDNEY PAGET.
- 29 **Out from the Night.** By ALICE MAUD MEADOWS. Illustrated by T. W. HENRY.
- 30 **The Rebels.** By M. McDONNELL BODKIN. Illustrated by J. AMBROSE WALTON.
- 31 **The Last Stroke.** By LAWRENCE L. LYNCH. Illustrated.
- 32 **A Master of Mysteries.** By Mrs. L. T. MEADE. Illustrated by J. AMBROSE WALTON.
- 33 **The Eye of Fate.** By ALICE MAUD MEADOWS. Illustrated by T. W. HENRY.
- 34 **A Bear Squeeze.** By M. McDONNELL BODKIN. Illustrated by HAROLD COPPING.
- 35 **£19,000.** By BURFORD DELANNOY. Illustrated.
- 36 **Willow, the King.** By J. C. SNAITH. Illustrated by LUCIEN DAVIS.
- 37 **The Man and His Kingdom.** By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM. Illustrated by J. AMBROSE WALTON.
- 38 **The Sanctuary Club.** By Mrs. L. T. MEADE. Illustrated by SIDNEY PAGET.
- 39 **Between the Lines.** By BURFORD DELANNOY. Illustrated by HAROLD PIFFARD.
- 40 **The Man of the Moment.** By MORICE GERARD. Illustrated by EDWARD READ.
- 41 **Caged.** By HEADON HILL. Illustrated by EDWARD READ.
- 42 **Under Fate's Wheel.** By LAWRENCE L. LYNCH. Illustrated by ST. CLAIR SIMMONS.
- 43 **Margate Murder Mystery.** By BURFORD DELANNOY. Illustrated.
- 44 **Agatha Webb.** By A. K. GREEN. Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.
- 45 **Captain Landon.** By RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE. Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.
-

LONDON: WARD, LOCK & CO., LTD.

The Windsor Library of Famous Books.



Large Crown 8vo, Cloth Gilt. Each with Four Illustrations.

5s. 6d.

A REMARKABLE feature of the world of fiction is that the yearly increasing supply of fresh romances, by both new and established authors, has no effect on the unfailing popularity of the recognised masterpieces. The demand for attractive editions of these books has never been greater than it is to-day, and it is to meet this want that the publishers are issuing this new series. The volumes are well printed from clear type on good paper, tastefully bound in a design that will grace the bookshelf, and splendidly illustrated. In a word, for value it is the best and cheapest series that has ever been published.

1	Pickwick Papers	CHARLES DICKENS
2	David Copperfield	CHARLES DICKENS
11	Vanity Fair	W. M. THACKERAY
12	The History of Pendennis	W. M. THACKERAY
16	Westward Ho!	CHARLES KINGSLEY
17	Hypatia	CHARLES KINGSLEY
18	Alton Locke	CHARLES KINGSLEY
21	It is Never too Late to Mend	CHARLES READE
26	Jane Eyre	CHARLOTTE BRONTË
27	Shirley	CHARLOTTE BRONTË
31	Ivanhoe	SIR WALTER SCOTT
32	Old Mortality	SIR WALTER SCOTT
41	The Last Days of Pompeii	LORD LYTTON
42	The Last of the Barons	LORD LYTTON

LONDON: WARD, LOCK & CO., LTD.

THE WINDSOR LIBRARY—continued.

43	Harold	LORD LYTTON
46	The Three Musketeers	ALEXANDRE DUMAS
47	The Count of Monte Cr 310	ALEXANDRE DUMAS
48	Twenty Years After.....	ALEXANDRE DUMAS
51	Cranford	MRS. GASKELL
52	Mary Barton	MRS. GASKELL
56	The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table ...	O. W. HOLMES
61	Charles O'Malley	CHARLES LEVER
62	Jack Hinton	CHARLES LEVER
71	The Tollers of the Sea	VICTOR HUGO
72	The Hunchback of Notre Dame ...	VICTOR HUGO
73	Les Misérables	VICTOR HUGO
76	John Halifax, Gentleman ...	MRS. CRAIK
81	Adam Bede	GEORGE ELIOT
82	The Mill on the Floss... ..	GEORGE ELIOT
86	Geoffry Hamlyn	HENRY KINGSLEY
91	Katerfelto	G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE
92	The Gladiators	G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE
96	A Study in Scarlet	SIR A. CONAN DOYLE
98	Out of the Hurly Burly.....	MAX ADLER
99	Elbow Room	MAX ADLER
103	In Strange Company.....	GUY BOOTHBY
109	Orley Farm	ANTHONY TROLLOPE
115	Danesbury House.....	MRS. HENRY WOOD
120	Ben Hur	LEW WALLACE
121	The Fair God	LEW WALLACE
122	Handy Andy	SAMUEL LOVER
125	The Last of the Mohicans	J. FENNIMORE COOPER
130	Frank Fairleigh	FRANK SMEDLEY

LONDON: WARD, LOCK & CO., LTD.

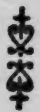

Some Magazines are

MERELY MASCULINE.

Others are

FRIVOLOUSLY FEMININE

THE **WINDSOR**

STANDS  *As the Illustrated Magazine*
ALONE  *for Men and Women*

ITS STORIES—Serial and Short alike—are by the leading Novelists of the day.

ITS ARTICLES, ranging over every branch of our complex modern life, are by recognised Specialists.

ITS ILLUSTRATIONS represent the high-water mark of current Black-and-White Art.

These features combine to make the **Windsor's** contents, month by month, a popular theme for conversation in circles that are weary of the trivialities of the common-place periodicals.



In addition to its strong interest for **Men and Women**, the **Windsor** makes a feature of publishing the Best Studies of **Child-Life** that the modern cult of youth has yet produced in fictional literature.

The WINDSOR'S recent and present contributors include—

Rudyard Kipling	Hall Caine	Anthony Hope
Mrs. F. A. Steel	E. Nesbit	Ethel Turner
S. R. Crockett	Guy Boothby	Robert Barr
Cutcliffe Hyne	Ian Maclaren	Barry Pain
Max Pemberton	Frankfort Moore	Gilbert Parker

London : **WARD, LOCK, & CO., LIMITED.**

INE.

R

azine

...

Novelists

modern

current

strong
and
indsor
of pub-
Studies
that the
uth has
fictional

lope

ner

rr

n

rker